





Class QL 568

Book A6N7

BUZ

OR

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF A HONEY BEE

BY

MAURICE NOEL



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1898

QL568

A6727

~~QL568
A6727~~

51040

104

YRABLL INT

228000 70



PREFACE.



IN this little story, the author ventures to hope that he may succeed in interesting children—perhaps even some big children—in the habits of bees, and in inducing them to study for themselves their most wonderful lives.

He has attempted to describe a few only of the many operations with which all bee-keepers of the present day are perfectly familiar, and has not introduced any mention of the bar-framed hives, which make the manipulation of bees comparatively simple.

His object has been to awaken interest rather

than to attempt instruction; but, at the same time, except for such parts of it as are obviously imaginary, his story describes nothing that he has not witnessed in his own hives.

In case any of his readers should wish for practical information on the subject, he may mention that a little book, called *Modern Bee-keeping*, has been published for the "British Bee-keepers' Association," and contains the collective experience of the best bee-keepers in the country.





CONTENTS.

—o—

| | PAGE. |
|--|-------|
| CHAPTER I. | |
| COMING OUT | I |
| CHAPTER II. | |
| FIRST FLIGHTS—NARROW ESCAPE | 16 |
| CHAPTER III. | |
| DISPUTE WITH A PEACOCK BUTTERFLY—THE SNAIL SETTLES IT | 34 |
| CHAPTER IV. | |
| SWARMING | 49 |
| CHAPTER V. | |
| BUILDING COMB—AN ACCIDENT—STORING HONEY— A SURPRISE | 65 |

| | PAGE. |
|--|-------|
| CHAPTER VI. | |
| A SECOND SWARM—IDLE HOURS—SENT BACK . | 78 |
| CHAPTER VII. | |
| DISCONTENTED WHISPERS—A STORMY DISPUTE—THE MASSACRE OF THE DRONES . . . | 92 |
| CHAPTER VIII. | |
| DEATH OF HUM—ROBBERY—RESTITUTION . . | 101 |
| CHAPTER IX. | |
| CAUGHT IN A COBWEB—THE SPIDER'S PLAN . . | 115 |
| CHAPTER X. | |
| BATTLE—VICTORY—DEATH | 126 |

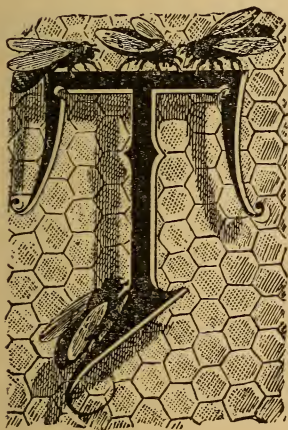




BUZ.

CHAPTER I.

COMING OUT.



HE first thing Buz remembered was having the cramp very badly in two of her left legs, and not being able to stretch them; for she was so carefully packed up in her cell that it was impossible to move.

But she found there was a chance of getting through the ceiling; so she bit and pushed, and pushed and bit, till she could put her head out.

This was satisfactory, as far as it went, but it had its inconveniences.

A bee immediately ran across her face, and she shrank back. She put it out again, and two bees, in a desperate hurry, trod all over it, and she shrank back again.

And so for some time she kept on trying to emerge and being driven back, till at last, becoming accustomed to the manners of the hive, and taking no notice of the pushes and shoves, she scrambled out, and stood on the comb—a very promising young bee.

Then up ran a couple of bees, one of whom straightened out her proboscis, or tongue, which was lying folded back, and offered her honey; while the other caressed her with her antennæ, and stroked her with her fore feet.

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure," said Buz, sucking away.

"Stretch your wings and legs, and never mind thanking us," answered one of the bees.

"We all do our duty here," said the other, "without wanting thanks. We attend to you because it's our place to do it."

"You didn't help me to scramble out of the cell," remarked Buz; "and what a scramble it was!"

"It's not our place to do that. A bee that couldn't get out of her cell would be no good here."

At this moment, a young bee, from the cell next to that which Buz had just left, came out, very crumpled, and received similar attentions.

Buz looked on with much interest, while the new arrival, who was named "Hum," was groomed and fed.

"Now," said one of the nurse bees, "you two had better go out on the board in front of the hive, and sun yourselves. You won't work to-day, of course, nor to-morrow either, unless it's very fine; and don't forget," added she, touching first one and then the other with her antennæ, "that you are called 'Buz,' and you 'Hum.' Now be off with you."

"But which is the way to the board?" asked Buz. "Find out," replied the nurse who had last spoken, as she ran off. "Where's your instinct?" demanded the other, hurrying after her without waiting for an answer.

On being left to themselves, Buz and Hum began crawling down the comb, looking about them with great curiosity. The cells they had just left, were at the top of one of the center combs, and on their way down they did not meet with very many bees; for as the day was warm and bright, most of them

were away from the hive, gathering honey and pollen; but, as they approached the entrance, they found themselves surrounded by streams of busy workers, hurrying in every direction, some bringing in stores, and others, who had just deposited their last loads, bustling off to work again. But, however busy they might be, they all found time to touch Buz and Hum with their antennæ as they passed; and these last, instinctively put their own forward and returned the compliment; indeed, they felt as if it would not be comfortable to pass within touching distance of a single bee without that little recognition; it seemed like saying "All's well."

Arrived on the floor of the hive, they stood still and looked about them. After a little time they noticed that the two combs between which they had just descended, looked rather darker and dirtier than those on the outside, and that it was toward the latter that the honey-laden bees were hastening.

"I wonder why?" said Buz.

"Yes, I wonder," echoed Hum.

"What are you wondering about?" inquired a great drone, who chanced to be passing lazily along, and who overheard what Buz said.

"We were wondering why some combs looked so much blacker than others," replied Buz.

"Because they are used as nursery combs," said the drone. "Lots of young bees are born in them, and each cell is used over and over again."

"Are they never used for honey?" asked Hum.

"Only if there's no room for it elsewhere; they always like to put honey in a nice new comb, and then it's called 'Virgin honey.' But," he continued, "in an old hive, every comb gets used for young ones, or grubs as we call them, in time. This isn't an old hive."

"You say 'they,'" remarked Buz, rather timidly; "don't you get honey yourself, then, and work like the others?"

"I should think not!" replied the drone, with great disdain. "Work, indeed!" And he moved slowly away.

Then the two young bees went on toward the entrance of the hive, and, after being well jostled, and ever so much pushed about and run over, all of which they didn't mind a bit, they reached the board outside, and looked upon the world for the first time.

But they soon had to change their position, for they were standing exactly in the stream of traffic.

"Now then," said a bee, who was waddling in with two great lumps of pollen on her thighs, and

who bumped against Buz, "get out of the way, can't you!"

"Come, come," said another to Hum, "you mustn't stand there, you know; which is it to be now—in or out?"

"I'd rather go out, please," answered Hum.

"In fact, we've been sent out to sun," added Buz.

"Out with you then," said the bee, "and ask one of the fanners to show you where to stand."

"What's a fanner?" thought Buz. However, she didn't ask, for fear of being again told to find out; so she passed on with Hum through the entrance. Just outside, a bee was standing quite still, and as Buz passed she felt the ends of her antennæ very much whirred against and tickled, and on looking up found that this was occasioned by the wings of the bee in question, who was moving them so fast that they were almost invisible; in fact, she was nearly lifted by them off her hind legs—sometimes quite—and seemed to have hard work to keep herself down by clinging on to the board with the claws of her front feet.

"I shouldn't wonder if that was a fanner," remarked Buz to Hum.

"I'm a fanner, right enough," said the bee, who had overheard her. "What of that?"

"We were told to ask you where to stand," answered Buz.

"Get to the other side of me then, toward the edge of the board, and out of the way."

Buz and Hum did so, and were then able to look quietly about, without getting so tremendously knocked against. They soon noticed that, besides the fanner they had spoken to, there were half a dozen more, all busy in the same way.

"What do you keep on fanning for?" asked Buz, who was rather a bumptious young bee.

"What for?" replied the fanner. "Why, to give the queen and the nurses and all in the hive a little fresh air; they would be stifled this hot weather, if something wasn't done."

"Ah!" said Hum, "I noticed a current of air as we came out."

"I should hope you did," returned the fanner; it would be a pretty thing for us all to be working away like this for nothing!"

At this moment a bee passed in with a splendid load of pollen on her thighs, the two great yellow balls she carried being almost enough to prevent her from staggering along.

"Well done!" said the fanner encouragingly as

she passed. "Good again, old mate!" and then, turning to Buz and Hum, she added—

"That bee came out of the cell next to mine, and we were born almost at the same time, so we take an interest in each other."

"Only an interest?" inquired Buz. "I should have thought you were great friends, like Hum and I mean to be; eh, Hum?"

Hum touched Buz with her antennæ in a friendly way.

"There isn't much time to be great friends here," answered the fanner; "we are always so busy, except in the winter, and then we are too sleepy to be very affectionate. Besides, we give all our love to the queen; you haven't seen her yet, I suppose? Wait till you do—you'll find it's just as I tell you. Now then! Where are *you* going? Look out, there! Help! Intruder! Intruder!"

As she spoke, the fanner made at a bee who had just alighted, and was passing in. She was joined by several others, and they were about to seize the intruder, who, however, discovered the mistake, and flew off just in time.

"What was all that about?" asked Buz, as the fanner returned.

"A bee from some other hive was trying to get

into ours," replied the fanner; "but she found out where she was just in time. If we had caught her, we should perhaps have stung her to death."

"How did you know she was a strange bee?" inquired Hum.

"We can tell at once, by touching or smelling a bee, whether she belongs to our hive or not; I don't pretend to explain exactly how it is, but we can."

This quite satisfied the young bees, who now became much interested in watching the workers arriving from every direction and alighting on the board.

Some were laden with pollen, others had collected nothing but honey, and all, the instant they arrived, set off to run into the hive as fast as they could, without waiting to look round or gossip.

They certainly were very much in earnest; any one could see that at once. Some seemed very tired, and nearly fell back off the board when they pitched on the edge of it, and indeed could hardly crawl along with their booty.

"I know where *that* bee comes from," remarked the fanner, as one with peculiar colored pollen on her thighs passed in. "I know quite well."

"Do you?" said Buz. "How?"

"By the look, and by the smell, and—in fact, I

do know ; she comes from Cothelestone Hill. It's a beautiful place for bees, but rather a long way off."

"How I should like to go there !" exclaimed Buz.

"Gently, gently," said the fanner ; "don't be in such a hurry."

"Indeed," added Buz, "I should like to try a short fly, now, this moment."

"You had better not to-day ; your wings will feel stiff and cramped. Wait till you have had a good feed, and a night's rest, and then you'll do very well. You see, the danger is, that if you get below the level of the board you may not be able to rise again ; and if you have to spend the night on the cold ground, I wouldn't give much for your chance of swarming, I can tell you."

"What's swarming?" asked Hum.

"Oh, I can't explain now ; it would take too long. You'll find out before the summer is over, I dare say."

At this moment a big rain-drop came splash down on the board, close to Buz, and astonished her immensely. It was followed by another and another, and soon a smart shower drove all the bees near at hand under shelter, and Buz and Hum entered the hive with them.

"What's happening?" asked Buz.

"They've upset the watering-pot somewhere," answered the fanner; "we never *can* find out exactly where they do it."

"Then how do you know it's a watering-pot?" inquired Hum.

"Sometimes," answered the bee, "when we are gathering honey in a bed of mignonette or other flowers, the gardener comes along with his watering-pot and upsets it over us, and then it feels so exactly like what's going on now, that we think it must be the same sort of thing, you know."

When the storm first began, a great many bees arrived from different directions, and crowded into the hive; and as those within were prevented from starting afresh, and were standing near the entrance, impatiently waiting for the rain to stop, there was a great bustle, and some difficulty in moving. Buz, however, kept near her friend and the fanner, and said to the latter:

"No more bees are coming in now; have they *all* returned?"

"Oh dear, no," answered the fanner; "those who were too far off to get back before the worst of the storm have found shelter somewhere; but," she added, "they'll soon stop watering now."

"How do you know?" asked Buz.

"I can feel it," said the fanner. "Any bee, after a little experience, can tell; and when they are going to water for a long time we do not go out in such numbers, or so far, as we do before a mere sprinkle like this. Look! It's just over."

This was quite true, and presently the sun shone brightly out, and the rain-drops flashed and sparkled, and a clean fresh smell came from the earth, and the flowers lifted up their heads and offered the sweets they contained to the busy, happy bees, who now left the hive in great numbers, and scattered themselves all over the kitchen garden in which their hive stood, and over the pleasant fields beyond.

"What fun!" exclaimed Hum, as they stood on the board again. "What fun to go out! Oh, how I long for to-morrow!"

Buz and the fanner looked at her with surprise. She seemed such a very quiet little bee, that they were hardly prepared to find she could become so enthusiastic.

"I can not bear to be idle," she continued; "I should like to fill a cell with honey, all by myself; to be of some use, you know, instead of standing and looking on while others work."

"A very proper feeling, my dear," said the fanner

approvingly ; " but you must remember that the great thing is to do your duty ; and if your present duty is—as I tell you it is—to do nothing, why, you are working very well and profitably by just standing still and being nicely sunned, ready for to-morrow, don't you see ? "

" Yes, I see, " answered Hum, more contentedly.

" At the same time, " continued the fanner, " there would be no harm in your trying to fan, if you would like to practice that ; only stand well out of the way, and take care at first not to work too hard. "

Hum, taking the permission without paying much attention to the caution, went to the side of the board and set to work, but so vigorously, that she turned herself completely over on her back, and would have lifted herself quite into the air if she had not clung very tightly to the board with her fore feet.

Buz was highly amused at this, and helped to set her right ; and Hum, though exceedingly astonished, and a little mortified at what had happened, set to work again at once, and in a very short time was really able to fan.

" That will be a useful bee, " remarked the fanner to Buz, as Hum continued practicing.

" I'm sure she will, " said Buz ; " but all bees work, don't they ? I shall, I know. "

"Oh, yes; a lazy bee wouldn't do here at all. But there are different dispositions in bees all the same; for instance, some will think only of how many cells they can fill with honey, and will consequently never go far from the hive, so as not to lose time; others are more adventurous, go further afield, and try to get curious sorts of honey."

"I shall be one of that sort," said Buz; "I know I shall."

"Then again," continued the fanner, "some bees are good-tempered, and others are cross; for instance, I know one who won't let any person but the gardener come near the hive; if any one else does, she goes straight at him, to sting or to pretend to sting him; and I must say it is very amusing to see a person run. I say, do you feel hungry?"

Buz was rather astonished at the sudden manner in which this question was asked, but replied, "Why, yes, I think I do."

"Because it is about time," continued the fanner, "for you and Hum to go back to your cells; young things ought never to be long without food. You will find the nurses somewhere about."

"Thank you," said Buz; and she went off to fetch Hum.

On their way into the hive Buz stopped, and said

to the bee, who was still fanning away as hard as ever, "Will you tell us your name, please?"

"My name's 'Fan.'"

"What, *because* you fan?"

"Oh dear, no; certainly not! I don't *always* fan, you know; I only take my turn."

"I understand," said Buz; and away went the two young bees to find their nurses and get some food.





CHAPTER II.

FIRST FLIGHTS—NARROW ESCAPE.



EXT morning, Buz and Hum were, of course, in a great hurry to leave the hive and try their wings; but one of the nurses, who happened to see them on their way to the entrance very early indeed, told them not to be tempted out by the bright rays of the sun, which had only just risen, but to wait till the world was a little warmer. "Many a young bee," she added, "yes, and many an older bee who ought to have known better, has left this hive on a bright-looking spring

morning, and has never returned, because it was really so much colder than it seemed that no bee could stand it. The fact is, we can not endure cold weather; we should like to be able to, but we can't, and so there's an end of it."

With these sagacious words the nurse took her departure, and Buz and Hum, though they felt it was a great trial to wait, agreed to do nothing foolish.

"At any rate," said the former, "we can stand out on the board, and run in directly we feel cold."

So out they went, and took a bee's-eye view of the garden.

It was certainly a lovely morning, and the sun shone right into the mouth of the hive, which faced east, or rather south-east, as a hive should.

The garden in which it stood, had a high wall all round it; but, as the ground sloped away, Buz and Hum could see the country beyond, and the end of the beautiful lime-tree avenue which led from the old house near at hand.

Such a comfortable, old-fashioned country-house it was, with many gable-ends, and queer bits of building sticking out from it in all directions. It didn't belong to any particular order of architecture, and didn't want to. There was nothing at all cor-

rect about it; and no architect, traveling through the country to pick up hints, would have thought of pulling out his book of plans to take a copy. You couldn't copy it—that was just the beauty of it; but no artist could possibly pass it without taking off a lot of sketches of odd bits and corners here and there, or without being delighted with the picturesque old place.

And inside! Was there ever such a place for children to play hide-and-seek in? There were really no end of long passages, and big cupboards, and tiny rooms; while, as for stairs! they were here, there, and everywhere: almost every room had two or three steps leading up to it, or two or three steps leading down to it; for the architect, or rather architects (there must have been a dozen of them employed at different times), seemed to have said, "No, we won't have any two rooms exactly on the same level—not if we can help it." Some of the rooms had windows that looked down into the old hall; others had managed to get so exactly into the middle of the house that there was nothing for it but to light them from the next room; but that didn't matter a bit: they did famously for keeping bandboxes and odd things in, and there were heaps of rooms to spare. Nowadays, people wouldn't like

to build in that sort of way, they are so particular about turning every inch of space to account; and one might tell from a glance at the outside of a modern house the situation of all the rooms within. Well, that wasn't the case with Heathercombe, at any rate; but, such as it was, no one could have helped saying, "What a dear, comfortable old place! I wonder what its history is? There must be plenty of stories belonging to it." And so there were, as even the old lime trees in the avenue knew quite well.

The garden exactly suited the house, so it is hardly necessary to say that there was nothing formal about it. You couldn't take in the whole pattern of the flower-beds at once, as if you were looking at a Turkey carpet; for little narrow paths, that twisted about as much as they possibly could, led you to all kinds of odd nooks and out-of-the-way corners, here passing a quaint bit of yew hedge, and there rounding a clump of enormous shrubs; and in all the corners and in every nook you would find a little flower-bed or two, filled with dear old-fashioned flowers—moss roses, wall-flowers, columbines, stocks, marigolds, and many others; and hardly any of those eternal geraniums with dreadful names, and calceolarias of high degree, which have to be shown

in stiff regimental order, and which look very lovely in certain places, but wouldn't have suited the old garden at all. Then there were plenty of rustic seats and dear little summer-houses, and, of course, an old sundial, so covered with moss that the figures on the dial were completely hidden—that didn't matter; it would have been a shame to dream of utilizing it—and on the summer-houses, sweetbriers and honeysuckles crept and twined and hung as much as ever they liked; and mignonette grew in patches all about the place, and even the steps of the old sundial were covered with musk.

What with all the sweet flowers, and what with the yew hedges and tall shrubs, affording shelter from any wind that might blow, it was the place of all others for bees.

But Buz and Hum knew nothing about this as yet, and as they looked at the kitchen garden they thought it was big enough for any thing. There were no fanners at work on the board: the morning was too cool for them to be needed—so cool that, though plenty of bees kept on walking to the edge of the board and taking observations—it was some time before any flew off.

At last, as the sun's rays grew warmer, one or two were hardy enough to start away on their long

day's work ; but just then Buz and Hum felt quite chilled, and had to run into the hive, where they very soon got nice and warm again.

"How lucky it is," said Hum, "that we didn't fly off at once!"

"Why, yes," replied Buz, "it is certainly colder than it seemed at first; after all, I suppose it's a good thing to take advice."

"Take advice," repeated a bee who was standing near the entrance, and who heard what Buz said; "I should think it *was*, just. But what advice have you been taking?"

So Buz told her, and she seemed pleased, and said :

"I'll tell you what it is, if you two will stay with me I'll let you know when I consider it warm enough for you to go out; and when I consider it so, it will be so."

"Come," thought Buz, "she doesn't seem to mistrust her judgment much."

"I might perhaps be tempted," continued the bee, "to go out a little too soon myself, but when one judges for others one is not led away by inclination; do you understand?"

"Yes," replied Buz, "you mean that it does not matter to *you* how long *we* have to wait, don't you?"

"That's about it," said the bee.

"But shan't we keep *you* waiting?" asked Hum.

"No; I'm not going out this morning. I shall fan when it gets warmer: that's my work to-day. Now, if you are warm again, we'll just step out and take a look round."

So they all three went out, and even in the short time they had been away they found that the sun had become much more powerful.

But their newly-made friend would not let them start quite at once, and took the opportunity of giving them several hints about collecting honey, and so on. "However," she added, "I won't bother you any more now; for there is a certain party to whom you are going to be introduced, who will teach you more in a day than you could learn from me in a week."

"Who?" asked Buz and Hum together.

"Experience," answered the bee, looking very wise indeed.

And now at last the time came, and Buz and Hum were allowed to try their wings.

"Follow me," said their friend; "I can spare time to fly a little way; and when I stop, you stop too."

"All right," cried Buz, trembling with excitement.

Hum said nothing, but her wings began to move, almost in spite of herself.

Away went the bee, as straight as a line from the mouth of the hive, and away flew Buz and Hum after her ; but at first starting they both found it a little difficult to keep quite straight, and Buz knocked against the board to begin with, and nearly stopped herself, as she had not learned how to rise.

The bee did not go far, and lit on the branch of a peach tree which was growing against a wall hard by. Buz came after her in a great hurry, but missed the branch and gave herself a bang against the wall. Hum saw this, and managed to stop herself in time ; but she did not judge her distance very well either, and got on to the peach tree in a scrambling sort of way.

“Very good,” said their friend, as they all three stood together ; “you will soon be able to take care of yourselves now ; but just let me see you back to the hive.”

So off they flew again, and alighted on the board in a very creditable manner.

“Now,” said the bee, “I shall leave you ; but before I go let me advise you, as a friend, not to quit the garden to-day ; there are plenty of flowers,

and plenty of opportunities for you to meet with 'Experience,' without flying over any of the four walls. Good-by."

So saying, she disappeared into the hive.

"Isn't it too delightful!" exclaimed Buz to Hum. "Flying! why it's even more fun than I thought!"

"It is," said Hum; "but I should like to get some honey at once."

"Of course," replied Buz, "only I should like to fly a good way to get it."

"I want to fill a cell quickly," said Hum.

"Oh yes, to be sure! What a delightful thing it will be to put one's proboscis down into every flower and see what's there! Do you know," added Buz, putting out her proboscis, "I feel as if I could suck tremendously; don't you?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Hum, "I *long* to be sucking; let's be off at once."

So away they went, and lit on a bed of flowers.

Hum spent the day between the hive and that bed, and was quite, quite happy; but Buz, though she too liked collecting the honey, wanted to have more excitement in getting it; and every now and then, as she passed to and from the hive, a lovely field of

clover, not far off, sent forth such a delicious smell, as the breeze swept over it, that she was strongly tempted to disregard the advice she had been given, and to hurry off to it.

At last she could stand it no longer; and, rising high into the air, she sailed over the wall and went out into the world beyond.

Yes, right out into the world; and very much did she enjoy the sense of freedom, of going as high as she liked and flying as fast as she could, and stopping exactly when and where she felt inclined, with nobody to bother her with good advice—which she was ready to admit was all very well, though, at the same time, a person couldn't everlastingly be taking it. She had had quite enough for one day, she was sure of that; and so she hadn't told Hum of her intention to leave that poky old kitchen garden: Hum might be giving advice next and that would be too absurd!

And so she reached the field of clover, and, flying quite low over the flowers, was astonished to see what lots of bees were busy among them—bumble bees without end, and plenty of honey bees too; in fact, the air was filled with the pleasant murmur that they made.

"To be sure," said Buz to herself, "this is the

place for me ! Poor dear old Hum ! I hope she's enjoying herself as much as I am I don't mean to be idle either, so here goes for some honey."

But the first thing to do was to pick out a flower to settle on.

It seemed easy enough, for there were hundreds of thousands to choose from. That was just it ; who was to choose any particular flower out of such a lot ! A dozen times Buz was on the point of alighting on one, and a dozen times she was attracted by another close by, which seemed a little fresher, or a little richer, or a little larger. This wouldn't do at all ; she felt she was wasting time, and had just made up her mind to let herself fall anyhow into the clover and begin on the first bit she touched, when she caught sight of a splendid flower close to her. There was no mistake about it this time ; it was a king clover, she thought, so tall and fine, and promising such a supply of honey that she settled on it at once in triumph.

And she eagerly unpacked her proboscis and explored, one after another, the cups of the many flowers clustered together in the head.

But how dreadfully disappointing ! Not a drop of honey, not the least little drop, could she find in the whole flower !

"Well, I declare!" she said aloud, as she raised her head at last in disgust, "it's perfectly dry!"

At this the flower gave a low silvery laugh, and shook a little on its stalk.

"Dry!" it repeated; "I should rather think I was; sucked as dry as a brick, half an hour ago."

"Indeed!" said Buz.

"Yes, my dear, indeed," repeated the flower cheerily; "and so many bees besides yourself have been sold this morning, that it's really quite ridiculous! I suppose you're a young bee, eh?"

"Well, rather," answered Buz. "Why?"

"You see, you young things always *will* pick out the biggest and tallest of us, and *will* waste your time in trying us all over, quite forgetting that others before you have most likely been attracted by just the same qualities that you admire yourself. Now let me give you a bit of advice."

"More advice," thought Buz to herself. "Oh dear!" However, she said politely enough that she would be glad to have it.

"Then," said the flower, "pick out the blossoms that are most hidden and most out of the way. Flowers that are really almost troublesome to get at are generally worth trying: you will find this the case nearly always; and remember also, that if the

first two or three cups of a head like mine be dry, it is hardly worth while trying all the others, for the same bee who cleared out the first will probably have worked out every cup in the flower. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do," replied Buz; "I know *I* should, at least. Well, I'm much obliged to you for the hint, and I'll be off at once and take advantage of it."

"All right," said the flower. "Good-by."

"Good-by," answered Buz; and away she flew.

Not for more than a few yards though; turning suddenly back, she lit once more on the same flower.

"I thought I'd just ask you," she said, "if it's a fair question, do you mind us bees taking away your honey; or do you consider us so many robbers?"

"Mind it!" replied the flower. "Not at all; you do us quite as much good as we do you, without being able so help it any more than we can."

"Do we really?" said Buz.

"Of course you do," answered the flower: "look at your legs."

Buz looked.

"I can only see a little yellow dust on them."

"Well, that's pollen; and the pollen from one flower fertilizes others. But how is it to get to them? It must be carried, of course; and though

sometimes the wind does this for us, you bees are the means we chiefly depend on. In short, without bees there would be a very poor look-out for flowers ; and, of course, we are necessary to you : so, you see, it's a case of ' tit for tat.' Good-morning."

"Good-morning again, and thank you," said Buz, as she flew away.

And now it was high time to set to work in earnest ; so Buz was very diligent indeed, and, remembering what the tall clover blossom had told her, she selected the most out-of-the-way flowers she could find, and soon collected as much honey as she could carry.

But by the time she had done this she found herself close to the further end of the clover field ; and while resting for a moment, before starting to carry her load to the hive, she noticed a little pond in the corner. Feeling thirsty after her hard work, she flew off to take a few sips ; but just as she reached the pond and was in the act of descending, a light gust of wind caught her and turned her half over, and before she could recover herself she was plunged far out into the water !

Poor Buz ! She was a brave little bee, but this was a terrible accident ; and after a few wild struggles she almost gave herself up. The water was so cold, and she felt herself so helpless in it ; and then

the accident had happened so suddenly, and taken her so utterly by surprise, that it was no wonder she lost courage. Only for a moment though; just as she was giving up in despair the hard and seemingly useless work of paddling and struggling with all her poor little legs at once, she saw that a bit of stick was floating near her, and with renewed energy she attempted to get to it. Alas! it was all she could do to keep her head above water; as for moving along through it, that seemed impossible, and she was tempted to give up once more. It was very hard though; there was the stick, not more than a foot away from her; if she could only reach it! At any rate, she was determined it should not be her fault if she was unsuccessful; so she battled away harder than ever, though her strength began to fail and she was becoming numbed with the cold. Just as she made this last effort another gust of wind swept over the pond, and Buz saw that the stick began to move through the water, and to come nearer and nearer to her. The fact was that a small twig sticking up from it acted as a sail, though Buz didn't know this. And now the stick was quite close, almost within reach; in another moment she would be on it. Ah! but a moment seems a long time when one is at the last gasp, as poor Buz was.

Would she be drowned after all? No! Just as she was sinking she touched the stick with one little claw, and held on as only drowning people can; and then she got another safely lodged, and was able to rest for a moment. Oh, the relief of *that*, after such a long and ceaseless struggle!

But even then it was very hard work to get up on the stick, very hard indeed. However, Buz managed it at last, and dragged herself quite out of the cold, cruel water.

By this time the breeze was blowing steadily over the pond, and the stick would soon reach the bank; but Buz felt very miserable and cold, and her wings clung tightly to her, and she looked dreadfully forlorn.

The pond, too, was overshadowed by trees; so there were no sunbeams to warm her.

"Ah!" thought she, "if I can manage to drag myself up into the sunshine, and rest and be well warmed, I shall soon be better."

Well, the bank was safely reached at last; but Buz, all through her life, never forgot what a business it was climbing up the side. The long grasses yielded to her weight, and bent almost straight down, as if on purpose to make it as uphill work for her as possible. And even when she reached the top

it took her a weary while to get across the patch of dark shadow and out into the glad sunlight beyond ; but she managed to arrive there at last, and crawling on the top of a stone which had been well warmed by the sun's rays, she rested for a long time.

At last she sufficiently recovered to make her way, by a succession of short flights, back to the hive. After the first of these she felt so dreadfully weak that she almost doubted being able to accomplish the journey, and began to despond.

"If I ever do get home," she said to herself, "I will tell Hum all about it, and how right she was to take advice ; in fact, my story shall be known throughout the hive : it may be a useful warning to many young bees yet unhatched."

Now, whether it was that the exercise did her good, or that the sun's rays became hotter that afternoon, can not be known : but this is certain, that Buz felt better after every flight, and before she had reached the end of the clover field she had almost determined to say nothing about her adventure, except, of course, to Hum. "What's the use of being laughed at?" she thought. "I shouldn't mind much if it would do any good ; but would it? that's the point. I fancy not ; the young bees would

only be amused at hearing what a mess I had got into, but they never would think of the story at the right time. No, I shall certainly not make it public."

So she sipped a little honey, cleaned herself with her feet, and stretched her wings, and, with the sun glistening brightly on her, looked quite fine again. Her last flight brought her to the top of the kitchen-garden wall, from which she was just about to start for the hive, when she thought how disagreeable it would be to meet Hum and tell her every thing. "After all, what good can possibly come of alluding to my adventure?" she said to herself. "It hurt no one but me, and I'm all right again now; so I may say it has done me good. No, I declare I'll say nothing at all about it to Hum or any one else: that will be the best way."

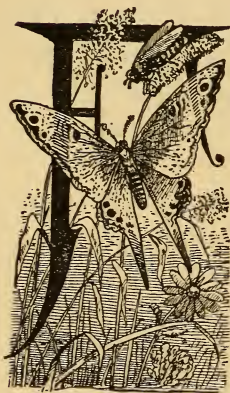
So she opened her wings and flew gayly to the hive, which she entered just as if nothing had happened.





CHAPTER III.

DISPUTE WITH A PEACOCK BUTTERFLY.
THE SNAIL SETTLES IT.



OR a few days after her narrow escape, Buz did not venture far from the hive, and worked steadily and well. She now and then met Hum, and they were always good friends; but she found that what she had heard was quite true, and that there was not much time for any thing but work. One morning, however, as they were both waiting near the entrance of the hive till it should be warm enough to go out, Hum asked Buz if she had seen the queen yet.

"I should think so!" replied Buz. "The first time I met her, I was carrying in some honey, and was passing between two combs, when, without knowing why, I found myself turning round to the right and bowing away like any thing! 'What's the matter with me?' thought I; 'this is quite ridiculous'—but ridiculous or not, I did not seem to be able to stop, and was actually getting angry with myself, when I saw, in the midst of a circle of bees close to me, one who I felt must be the queen. She was so long in the body and so graceful, and her wings were so much shorter than ours, that no one could help seeing the difference at once; and, then, all the bees round were careful to keep their heads turned toward her. She was busy laying eggs, and I watched her for some time; but one got tired of that, and so I squeezed out of the crowd. I suppose you've seen her too?"

"Oh, yes!" answered Hum, "and she noticed me quite kindly; I'd do any thing for her—any thing!"

"Certainly," said Buz; "I suppose you feel that you couldn't do a stroke of work unless you knew that she was in the hive, and all safe."

"Yes," answered Hum, "I quite feel so."

"With regard to that," pursued Buz, "every bee in the hive is just the same."

"How do you know?"

"A drone told me."

"I have several times seen you talking to drones."

"I always go to a drone when I want to know any thing."

"Do you really?"

"Yes, of course ; bees who work hard like you, old Hum, never have time to explain, but are always in such a hurry to be off. Now drones are very lazy in every other way, but are tremendous gossips, I find."

"Ah!" said Hum ; "I remember nurse telling me that if I showed her a lazy person, she would show me a gossip."

"That's it!" cried Buz. "Well, a drone told me that the custom we all have of touching each other with our antennæ whenever we pass, was introduced on purpose to save the trouble of asking after the queen. It's merely a signal that every thing is going on well with her."

"I can believe that," said Hum, "for it's just what I feel."

At this moment the sun peeped over a bank of morning clouds, and called the bees to work ; and out went Buz and Hum with the rest, the former making her way to the old-fashioned flower garden near the house.

Here she was soon busy among some early stocks and mignonette which grew near the sundial, and had already made several journeys to and from the hive, when she was addressed by a peacock butterfly which she had noticed flitting about, and which was now sitting on the top of the dial itself.

"You seem to have something *like* an appetite this morning!" said the butterfly.

"What do you mean?" said Buz.

"But you'll make yourself ill, you know," continued the butterfly.

"I'm sure I shan't!" answered Buz, indignantly.

"Unless you're like a snake," persisted the butterfly in an aggravating manner, "and can take in enough food for a week."

"You don't know what you're talking about," cried Buz, turning angrily away.

"Oh, yes, I do," said the butterfly coolly; "I've been watching you, and thinking. It's the only thing I've been doing."

"And you've done that wrong," retorted Buz; "so it's a pity you weren't asleep."

"I've been thinking," repeated the butterfly, as if she hadn't heard what Buz said, "that you bees are a greedy lot; and the more I think of it, the more I

can't remember ever seeing a bee that was doing any thing except what you're doing now."

"Do you mind saying that again?" said Buz sarcastically; "it's a pretty sentence, very!"

"Not at all," said the butterfly. And she repeated it all over again, word for word, and seemed quite pleased.

This bothered Buz, who didn't exactly know what to say; when the butterfly continued in the calmest manner—"The simple truth is, you're *always* thinking of eating."

"Why, you ignorant, conceited creature!" cried Buz; "how dare you tell me that?"

"Because it's a fact—come now, isn't it?" said the butterfly.

"No! No!! No!!! It's a most abominable story!"

"You seem a little put out," said the butterfly, "which is foolish; people can't always agree, you know. Now, suppose you come here and talk the matter over with me quietly. I'm sure you can spare a few minutes."

Buz was at first inclined to refuse indignantly; but remembering what a triumph it would be to prove the butterfly wrong in every thing she said, consented.

"That's right," said the butterfly, as Buz settled down close to her. "Now begin."

"How?" asked Buz.

"I made a statement that seemed to annoy you. You must either admit it, or prove I'm wrong. My statement was, that you bees are always thinking of eating."

"I certainly don't admit it."

"Then disprove it."

"To begin with, we don't—but, I say," said Buz, suddenly interrupting herself, "why shouldn't *you* prove you're *right*?"

"Any thing you please; I won't be particular with you. Well then, I've observed, not you alone, but dozens of other bees—not on this day alone, but on dozens of other days—and you have all been doing the same thing—always. You have all been employed in sucking every drop of honey out of every single flower you could get at; as for ever resting, or playing about, or even stopping to talk—why you *know* you never do. Those are the observations I have made myself, and on those observations I base my statement—I base my statement," repeated the butterfly, speaking very slowly, and evidently rather proud of herself.

"Among your other observations," said Buz, try-

ing to talk as calmly as the butterfly, "have you ever noticed that we are in the habit of leaving at intervals the flowers on which we are busy, of flying rapidly away, and of returning after a short absence?"

"I have," replied the butterfly.

"Can you tell me why we do so?"

"If you'll promise not to be vexed, I'll tell you what I've always thought."

"I'll promise," said Buz.

"To get an appetite for a little more honey."

"Ah! then you're just wrong—as wrong as ever you can be."

"Am I really?" said the butterfly. "Well, you know, it was only a guess, and isn't of the least consequence."

"But it is," cried Buz, "of the greatest possible consequence, and so you'll be driven to admit when I explain that we leave the flowers, on purpose to deposit the honey we have collected, in our hive; and there it is stored up for our use during the winter. So you see we don't eat it at all, or think of eating it—there!—and so you're wrong!" concluded Buz, excitedly.

"Then you'd like me to withdraw my statement?" asked the butterfly.

"Of course ; you *must* withdraw it, now you know that I have hardly eaten any honey all this morning—not so much as you have, I daresay."

"Very good," replied the butterfly ; "but before I do so, tell me if I am wrong in thinking you said the honey was stored for your use during the winter."

"That's just what I said."

"May I ask how you use it?"

"Why, we eat it, of course," said Buz.

"Then all this morning you must have been thinking—not of what you were eating, certainly—but of what you are going to eat in the winter. Dear me ! dear me ! This is even worse than I thought," said the butterfly, almost sadly.

"But it isn't greediness on our part," said Buz ; "we call it, being provident."

"It sounds greedy to me though," said the butterfly. "According to your own account, you think all the summer of what you are going to eat all the winter. You think of nothing else, and work like slaves, and never have any fun. Well, I wouldn't be a bee !"

Buz was rather disconcerted at the turn the conversation had taken, and, more to gain time than for any other reason, she asked the butterfly how she spent *her* time.

"I do exactly what I like all day long, and never think of a moment beyond the present. If I feel hungry, I eat, and directly I'm satisfied I think of food no longer; if I am hot, I fly in the shade; if cold, I bask in the sun. When I feel lively, I dance gayly up and down in the air, and the moment I'm tired, I stop. I have a thousand companions as gay and beautiful as myself, always ready to play with me, and nothing can put me out, for I don't care what happens to me."

"But when the cold winter begins?"

"Then I shall die," said the butterfly, very cheerfully—"at least, so I suppose; but what of that? Perhaps I shall like it."

"At any rate," said Buz, "you have described a very selfish, useless sort of life."

"And in what sense is yours useful?" retorted the butterfly, "except to yourself perhaps. If you do not gather all the honey you talk about for your own use, you at least expect a share of what the other bees in your hive collect; so that in point of fact you only work hard in order to keep yourself alive. I ask again, what's the use of your keeping alive?"

"To begin with," said Buz, "I help to make the cells in which we rear the young grubs, and to col-

lect the food with which we feed them—and in that way I am unselfishly useful, you must allow.”

“Perhaps; but after all, what do you gain by working hard to rear a lot of things as useless as yourself? I know there will be dozens of young caterpillars—nasty things!—crawling about some day, that will all come out of the eggs I laid yesterday. Do you suppose I’m proud of that? Certainly not.”

Buz suddenly remembered what the clover flower had told her with regard to the use of bees in distributing pollen, and eagerly repeated it to the butterfly, who only said—

“I sincerely hope you don’t take any credit to yourself for that. You surely are not proud of doing what you couldn’t *help* doing, however hard you tried?”

“I like to think I am useful, even if no praise is due to me for doing so. My life would not be spent in vain if I were useful *even against my will*, and I still say that it is a higher and nobler one than yours. I am convinced that the consciousness of being usefully employed——”

“I deny the usefulness to any one but yourself, mind,” put in the butterfly.

“Makes life far happier,” continued Buz, “than it

can possibly be in your case, who live only for self-indulgence; and, even if it be true, as you affirm it is, that my existence is utterly in vain, the very fact of my longing to be of use, and of your being unwilling to be useful even if you could, makes me certain that it is better to be a bee than a butterfly."

"Pity we can't agree!" said the butterfly. "Fine day, ain't it?"

Buz was so annoyed at the flippant manner in which the butterfly put an end to the conversation, in which she had really become interested, that she turned to leave without saying another word, when she heard a thick, muffled voice, so close to her that she quite started—

"I'm very old." Then there was a pause. "Very old indeed," continued the voice, which Buz now found proceeded from a large snail, stuck close to the edge of the sundial. "Hundreds of years, perhaps," said the snail slowly, as if he was reckoning up.

"Thousands, I should say," remarked the butterfly, in a low voice.

"And I know a lot." Here there was a long pause.

"He knows how to keep silence, at any rate," said the butterfly to Buz.

"Which is more than *some* people do," retorted Buz.

"In here I think a good deal," continued the snail. "I was once imprisoned in a rock for over a hundred years; I thought a good deal then."

Buz didn't know what to say, and even the butterfly made no remark; the voice was so very solemn, and also she felt that the snail wouldn't have cared for any words of hers. The latter soon continued—

"I once considered the subject of your late conversation (of which, I must tell you, I heard every word) for fifty years at a stretch."

"Did you get a headache after it?" the butterfly couldn't help asking. But the snail didn't seem to hear her, and Buz took no notice whatever of the question.

"And as," said the snail, "you were both totally wrong in the conclusions to which you came, I shall just put you right. You bee," he continued—suddenly shooting out the horn nearest to Buz, and keeping it pointed toward her—"seem to despise the butterfly for not working, or taking any care for the future, and for leading a vain and useless life, as you call it. Don't despise the butterfly. And you butterfly"—here he shot out his other horn, and pointed it at the insect he addressed—"appear to pity the

bee because she works hard during the summer, in order that she may keep herself alive through the winter, instead of enjoying herself while she may. Don't pity the bee."

The snail paused for a moment, and drew in both his horns, and then continued in a very solemn manner—

"What is right for one person, is wrong for another. If a bee were to lead the life of a butterfly, she would be miserable; for she was created in order that she might work, and no one can be really happy who is not fulfilling the object of his creation. On the other hand, if a butterfly were to attempt to work, she would fail, and be miserable also. So let the bee work as hard as she can, without being proud of doing what is only her duty—and she will be as happy as the butterfly. Let the butterfly sit in the sun and look beautiful, and enjoy all the pleasures of life and be thankful for them: above all, let her never look down on those whose duty it is to work; let her always have a soft heart and a kind word for such as are fagged and worn by the toil she is not called upon to endure herself—and the butterfly will be as happy as the bee. As for presuming"—(here the snail became as stern as such a soft thing conveniently could)—"as for presuming to settle which is

the nobler, or higher, or better life to lead, how dare you attempt to do so! It is not for you to decide. In my opinion, whoever does the work he is given to do, best—whatever that work may be—whatever that work may be, mind,” repeated the snail emphatically, putting out both his horns, and pointing one at each of the insects in a very significant manner—“leads the best life.”

At this moment the sun, which had been behind a cloud for some time, shone brightly out, and the snail retired into his shell at once, and rested on the cool soft moss which grew over the dial. The two insects looked at each other rather foolishly, and Buz was the first to speak :

“I’m glad that snail overheard us, and spoke out so plainly ; I seem to see things differently now, and retract what I said about selfishness.”

“And I,” answered the butterfly—who was really very good-natured, and was apt to hurt people’s feelings only from want of thought—“am very sorry indeed that I should have laughed at you or your work ; for I honor you in my heart, I do indeed. Now come,” she continued coaxingly, “do let us part friends ; and if you would let me take one of the hints given by that dear old snail, I should think it so kind of you. If ever you feel tired or over-

worked, or whenever things go wrong, do come and let me try to cheer you up ; now do ! ”

“ I certainly will,” answered Buz, “ though at the same time, I enjoy my work so much that I don’t expect to have to trouble you often ; however it’s quite nice of you to think of it,” she concluded, “ and I hope we may frequently meet. Now I really must be off. I don’t consider my time here has been wasted, but I am perfectly rested, and have plenty to do.”

“ I won’t try to detain you,” said the butterfly ; “ and mind, I shall always be most interested in hearing what work you are engaged in, and how it is getting on.”

“ And on my part,” answered Buz gayly, “ it will always be a pleasure to me to see you flying about and looking so pretty. Good-by, dear ! ”

“ Good-by, good-by ! ” echoed the butterfly, as Buz went off.

For some little time after this, the pretty butterfly sat and thought, but at last, rousing herself with a merry little laugh—“ I mustn’t become like the snail,” she said to herself ; “ *that’s* not my work, at any rate.”

So away she flew, in the highest possible spirits, in and out, in and out, among the flowers and over the shrubs that grew in the delightful old garden.



CHAPTER IV.

SWARMING.



ONE morning early, Buz was on the point of starting for the top of Cothelestone Hill. She had been there several times already ; indeed it was a favorite place of hers. She so thoroughly enjoyed the long flight to it through the air : it was so glorious to mount high up above the fields, and to see the dewdrops sparkling like diamonds in the morning sun—to listen to the lark as he took his first upward flight, and poured out his song for joy that another day had come—to inhale the fragrance of dawn, knowing that all the flowers which made it so

sweet, were waiting for her, and would be glad when they saw her coming. This was delightful indeed.

Then again, Buz always looked forward to interesting conversations with the flowers she visited, and the insects and creatures she met ; and she had a sort of idea that the further she strayed from the hive, the more curious would be her adventures, and the more charming the stories she was told. But this did not follow at all ; and many of the prettiest tales she heard, were repeated to her by flowers which grew in the old garden near the hive, though it was some time before she would admit this, even to herself.

On her way to the entrance on this particular morning, she perceived that a most unusual bustle was going on all through the hive ; and, directly the first bee touched her, she felt quite excited and disinclined to work, though she didn't exactly understand why. At this moment she saw a drone—"What's up now?" she cried, running to him in a great hurry.

"Don't fuss," said the drone snappishly.

"Well, I only want to know what all this stir and confusion means?"

"I'll tell you fast enough if you won't fuss. I

hate a bustle ; and there's enough of that, I'm sure, without your helping to make it worse."

" I'll be quiet as a grub," said Buz, speaking in a low voice and standing quite still, though she felt that she was becoming more restless every moment.

The drone looked at her for some time without saying a word ; and at last, in a provokingly indifferent manner, asked if she had been fanning lately.

" Yes," said Buz, " it was my turn yesterday, and it was a very hot day, and so I fanned a great deal ; and stupid work it was."

" Did you observe that there were often great clusters of bees hanging together, just by the board outside the hive? "

" Of course I did," replied Buz ; " they were there till the evening."

" Did you wonder why? "

" No ; I heard lots of them say that it was dreadfully hot inside, so I suppose they hung out to cool."

" Exactly ; do you know why it was so hot in the hive? I can tell you : partly because the day was so warm, and partly because there are such a lot of bees—too many bees, that's the fact. Well, the weather can't be made cooler, but some of the bees can go, and they will go too."

"Dear me!" said Buz, "will they? What! leave the hive?—really leave this hive?"

"How can they go without leaving the hive, stupid?" answered the drone.

"Of course they can't; but what will they do without a queen?"

"Our present queen will go with them; she knows it's too hot in the hive, so she will leave with a party of volunteers."

"Volunteers!" cried Buz; "what fun! I'll be one! I'll go! I may, mayn't I? Oh, I hope I may go!"

"Now, for honey's sake, don't fuss," said the drone.

"Certainly not," replied Buz.

But she was trembling with excitement. Any thing for a change, any thing for novelty. She never wished to be idle, and she liked all sorts of work; but put her to a different job every day—then she was happy! She cared little for danger, and explored all kinds of places that many bees—Hum, for instance—wouldn't think of going near; and now the thought of volunteering, and flying off with the dear old queen, and beginning life again, as it were, was charming. It suited Buz exactly; but, as she had still plenty of questions to ask the drone,

she kept as quiet as possible ; and he was much too lazy and indifferent to notice what an effort this was to her.

“ By the row that’s going on,” remarked the drone, “ I should say this would be a big swarm.”

“ A swarm ! ” exclaimed Buz ; “ then that’s what swarming is ! ”

“ A horrid noise, a hopeless confusion, a dreadful fuss, and an intolerable bustle—that’s what swarming is,” repeated the drone disdainfully. “ I shall certainly be glad to have the hive more empty,” he went on to himself ; “ but why can’t they go away quietly, and swarm one by one, I should like to know ? ”

“ Do none of the drones intend to join the swarm ? ”

“ Hundreds will, no doubt ; I shan’t.”

“ Will you tell me, please,” asked Buz, “ how you will get on here without a queen ? ”

“ You ask such stupid questions,” said the drone. “ You don’t think ; you’re in such a hurry—that’s it.”

“ How is mine a stupid question ? ”

“ Do you mean to tell me that you have never passed the royal nurseries ? Do you mean to say that you have never heard of royal food ? Do you wish me to understand that you have never been

told about the royal grubs?" demanded the drone.

"Of course I've heard of them." Buz said this a little impatiently—the drone spoke so very contemptuously.

"Oh, you have, have you? Then you will not be astonished when I tell you that royal grubs become queens, and that one of those in this hive is just ready to leave her cell; but she won't come out before the old queen has left. Oh, no! she'll take care of that—or rather the royal nurses will."

"Indeed; why?"

"Because the old queen would try to get at her, and sting her to death. You females are so jealous and spiteful!" answered the drone.

"I ain't a female!" cried Buz.

"Yes, you are, though; all you working bees are undeveloped females. Suppose now we had been in want of a queen, and we had picked you out as a grub, and enlarged your cell and fed you on royal bread: why, you would have become a queen! Actually you!"

"Really?"

"Yes, really; but it's too late *now*; no chance for you *now*, my dear; so you needn't be proud."

"I'm not a bit proud," cried Buz.

"No, I see you're not; on the contrary, you are condescending enough to come and speak to poor me! I feel the honor deeply, I assure you."

He said these last words in such a nasty, sarcastic manner that Buz determined to leave him. "Poor fellow!" she thought, "this noise and excitement must have made him cross." And indeed the confusion and hurrying about increased every minute.

"Good-by, Mr. Drone, said Buz. "I really am much obliged to you for what you have told me."

"I'm quite overwhelmed," said the drone, getting more disagreeable than ever. "Your politeness is something imperial. Are you *sure* you didn't get hold of any royal bread? Are you *sure* you ain't a queen? Just make certain of it—do! Fly out of the hive and see if the other bees won't swarm round you. They *may*. And what shall I do," he went on, "to show my respect? Shall I stick here waxed to the floor all the rest of my life in case you want to come back and ask any more questions? Only say the word. What! going off in a huff, are you? That's right, follow your temper—and make haste, or you'll never recover it!"

These last words were thrown after Buz, as she hurried away without trusting herself to speak. To

tell the truth, she was getting a little afraid of the drone, who seemed to have lost all command over himself; and she was so excited about the swarming that his words affected her less than they would otherwise have done; at the same time, it was exceedingly disagreeable to be so misjudged. "Though I brought it on myself," she thought; "and it shows what a mistake it is to keep on asking questions when you see a person's out of temper. I'll never do it again, I'll be stung if I do!"

Saying this, she ran round the corner of a comb in a great hurry, to see where the queen was, and what might be going on, and knocked up against a bee coming just as hastily in the other direction. It was Hum!—positively Hum! Only imagine *her* being excited about any thing but work! Buz was quite amused.

"Then you mean to swarm too, I suppose," she said.

"Well, no," answered Hum; "I think not. I couldn't very well, you know."

"I'm sure I *don't* know," said Buz.

"I've got into such a groove here, don't you see, that I'm almost afraid I couldn't bear to leave it. I know where every thing is now, and exactly where to go; and besides, I've got a——" Here Hum

stopped short, as if she had said rather more than she meant to.

"Got a what?" asked Buz.

"Well, dear, I'm afraid you'll think it foolish of me—I know you wouldn't consider it a reason yourself, and I dare say you're right; but the fact is——" and here Hum fidgeted about nervously, as if she was a little ashamed, "the fact is, I've got a cell that I am filling with honey all by myself; it's up in a corner, out of the way, and I couldn't bear to go before it was full. You understand, don't you?" concluded she, almost pleadingly.

"I think I understand what *you* feel, though I don't fancy I should mind leaving it myself. Well, I shall be very sorry to part from you, for you're the best bee in the world. I really have half a mind to stay," continued Buz suddenly; "I feel as if you would keep me out of scrapes."

"Oh, please don't let me prevent you from going!" cried Hum; "it would never do. I'm sure you are just the sort of person to join the swarm; you are so bold and active. I shall often think of you, dear Buz, and long to know how you are getting on; but we should seldom meet here you know, even if you were to remain."

"That's true," said Buz, thoughtfully; "and

after all, something tells me I ought to join the swarm. But, I say," added she briskly, "what is the state of the case exactly, for I hardly know?"

"I do," answered Hum. "I came straight from the queen when we met."

"Tell me all about it then."

"It seems that even yesterday the queen became restless, and said something about changing her house. I have it on good authority, for one of the royal attendants told me as much."

"Told you she said that?"

"Well, hardly; in fact, it's difficult to say exactly what she did tell me. She kept on hinting: she said, 'there might be changes before long, and what should I think of that?'—and 'the queen might use her wings before long, and what should I think of that?'—and 'because a certain royal person chose to live a certain time in a certain house, did it follow that that royal person was never to change her residence?'—and so on, you know."

"I hate that!" cried Buz. "Why couldn't she tell you outright, or leave it alone altogether?"

"It does appear foolish, when one comes to think of it," said Hum; "especially when one recollects

all the nods and whispers; but *at the time*, I suppose, it makes a person seem important; and I caught myself nodding mysteriously, and whispering too: very silly of me, to be sure!"

"Why, yes," said Buz. "I wish you had laughed at her, or, at any rate, pretended not to understand; but it can't be helped. What's the news this morning?"

"Nothing has actually happened yet, but the queen gets more restless every moment, and an old bee—one who has been in a swarm already—told me that she quite expected she would leave the hive to-day. I know I can't settle down to any thing. It's wretched work!"

"Come along," said Buz; "I want to be near the queen, and watch her."

The two friends were separated before they reached the royal presence, for great numbers of bees were crowding round. Buz soon pushed her way into a good place, and, just as she got there she heard the queen say to herself, "I've a very good mind to do it. Is it fine?" she asked, turning to her attendants.

"It is, your majesty," answered several.

"A very good mind," continued the queen to herself; "my family is becoming inconveniently large,

and this house doesn't do: it gets hot, much too hot. That's one reason, and there are two or three others."

"She means by that," said a bee very softly to Buz, "that there are two or three royal grubs just ready to come out; but she doesn't like alluding to them, even to herself."

"Too proud?" asked Buz, in a whisper.

"Too proud," answered the bee, with a confidential nod.

The queen was now close to them.

"I declare, I think I'll do it to-day," she repeated. "Did you say it was fine?" she added aloud, turning to her attendants.

"Very fine, your majesty," said they.

"Fine *enough*, eh?" asked the queen.

"Fine enough for *any thing*, your majesty," said the attendants, who were prevented by court etiquette from seeming to know what orders the queen was about to give, though every one knew perfectly well that every bee in the hive knew all about it. Curious, perhaps; but the laws of etiquette *are* curious—very.

"I hear a great noise," said the queen. "What is it?"

It was no wonder she did. Thousands of bees

were darting backward and forward just at the mouth of the hive, and the air was filled with a roaring sound. But the attendants appeared to be quite astonished.

"We'll go and inquire, your majesty," they replied.

They did so, and, returning immediately, said, "A few of your majesty's subjects are loitering about near the entrance, your majesty; would your majesty wish them to disperse?"

"No matter," said the queen. "A few, did you say?"

"Well, more than a *few*, perhaps, your majesty," replied the attendants, looking one at another; "more than a *few*."

"Are there enough, do you think?" asked the queen carelessly. "Are there as many as there ought to be?"

"There are enough for *any thing*, your majesty."

"And the day, you say, is fine enough?"

"For *any thing*, your majesty."

The excitement was becoming quite intense.

The queen, after showing great restlessness and indecision for several moments, suddenly grew calm, and, standing in the center of the circle drawn respectfully round her, gave a few shrill squeaks,

and said, "I have made up my mind to go. Let all who wish to join me wait outside, and be ready to SWARM!!!"

Directly she spoke the last word, there was an end to all restraint. It was the word so anxiously expected all the morning, and was now the signal for a general rush. It was passed round the hive in no time, and Buz took it up, and found herself repeating, like every one else, "A swarm! a swarm!! a swarm!!!" Meantime she pressed forward to the entrance. It seemed to her as if she would never reach it; but then, she was in such a desperate hurry. At last her struggles were rewarded, and, with dozens of other bees, she tumbled out of the hive—head over heels! any how!—and joined the excited mob in front.

There she dashed backward and forward as madly as any one, but always watching the entrance; always ready to follow the queen the moment she should appear.

She had not long to wait, for her majesty soon presented herself, and, after looking about her, spread her wings and flew slowly and steadily away.

By this time the noise was tremendous; such an angry noise too! But Buz hardly heard it, she was so excited, so bent on keeping the queen in sight.

Her majesty, after taking a short flight round the garden, just to pick out a good place, alighted on the under side of one of the branches of a small standard pear tree, and was immediately hidden by a cloud of about twenty thousand bees, which settled on and round her.

Buz was one of the first to take up her position, but, hardly liking to pitch on the queen, attached herself to the branch close to her, and was at once used by several other bees as a convenient thing to cling to; these in their turn were treated in the same way, till a lump of bees was formed as big as a good-sized cabbage, and Buz found it rather hard work to hold on.

"It must be uncommonly hot in the middle, though," she thought: "better be here than there."

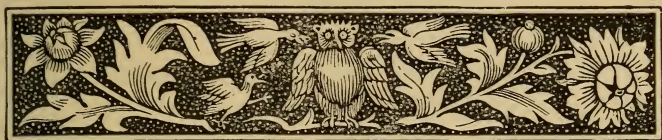
At this moment the gardener approached. His coat was off, and his shirt-sleeves were rolled up. He knew the bees would not sting him for shaking them into the new hive he carried, but he had to roll up his sleeves for fear of one crawling up and being hurt.

He now held the hive upside down under the swarm, took hold of the end of the bough on which it hung, and gave a sharp, strong jerk, which dislodged it and sent it right into the hive. There

was no hesitation, no indecision about him ; it was all the work of a moment. Instantly, a cloud of bees ascended all round him, and many alighted on his arms, and some even on his face. Of these he took no notice whatever ; but, seeing that a great cluster remained in the hive, he was satisfied that the queen was among them ; he then turned it over in its right position and stood it on four bricks placed on the ground, so that the bees outside could easily join their friends within. Having protected the hive from the sun with a few freshly cut boughs, he left the swarm alone till the evening. Buz was right in the middle this time, holding on like any thing to the bee just above her.

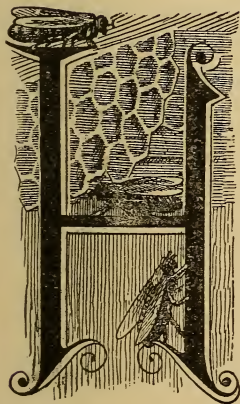
When it grew dusk, the gardener came back ; and finding that every bee had entered the hive, he placed it on a flat board, and carried it off to a stand which had been prepared for it, close to the old hive from which the swarm had come.





CHAPTER V.

BUILDING COMB. AN ACCIDENT. STORING HONEY.
A SURPRISE.



OW long shall we be squeezed together like this?" demanded Buz of a bee who was clinging to her.

"For days," answered the bee shortly.

"Come, I say," said Buz, "you don't mean that, do you?"

"If you don't believe me, ask some one else."

"Oh, I believe you, but how slow!"

"I dare say," remarked another bee, "that you

have heard of a queen having a great many attendants hanging about her at court; now you know what it means!"

At this moment the cluster of bees began to move, and to spread about.

The hive in which they had been taken was very different to the old straw butt they had left, their new abode being a square deal box without any bottom. Into the back of this box a pane of glass had been introduced, through which the bees might be watched at their work; and at the top of it was a short narrow slit, closed at present, but capable of being opened from without, by means of a zinc slide.

This box was placed in a wooden cupboard, which stood on four legs, had a gable roof, and doors opening at the back, and was large enough to contain three other boxes of the same size. Horizontal apertures, about two inches long and just high enough to admit a bee, were cut in the cupboard at the bottom of its front, and opposite each of the boxes within.

The floor of the cupboard, which was also the floor of the boxes, was cut away about the eighth of an inch deep, just underneath each of these apertures, and made to slope up toward the interior, so

that any rain driven into a hive might run out again at once. This pleased the bees, who hate damp beyond any thing.

The swarm now began preparations for the great work of forming the comb ; and hung from the top, no longer in a ball, but in sheets or strings, about which the bees could freely pass.

They formed, in fact, living scaffolding ; and, as they themselves produced material for the building, all the trouble of hauling and carrying was saved.

Each bee, besides holding on as tightly and as patiently as a postage-stamp, was busily employed in preparing plates of wax.

These were secreted in pockets on the under side of the abdomen, from which the bees drew them when ready for use, working and molding them in their mouths.

"I wonder how you can all go on so long without eating," remarked Buz at length in a general sort of way to the bees about her.

"In the same way that you can," answered one of them.

"Oh, *I* took in as much honey as ever I could, just before we swarmed," said Buz.

"Well, so we almost all did," replied her friend ;
"it is an instinct with bees."

"I wonder why," said Buz thoughtfully.

"It's simple enough," returned the other. "If we do not unload our honey, it is gradually formed into wax; so that arriving in a new hive with honey is almost the same thing as arriving with wax—and that we must have at once. So that only those few bees who happened to join the swarm without being full of honey have gone to work. The moment the honey you arrived with has become wax in your pockets, you will pull it out, and munch away at it till you have munched and pulled it into good order. Then you will place it in position, where you see it is wanted, and the nurse or architect bees will work it into shape. Then you will go out and get a fresh supply of honey, and again hang yourself up till it turns into wax. It's simple enough, as I said before."

Buz found that this was really the case, and in due time she deposited her bricks of wax, and left the architects at work, while she went off for a fresh supply of honey.

The architects began by attaching some wax to the roof of the box, and fashioning therefrom hexagonal cells—by employing which form, the greatest number can be arranged in the smallest place.

Each comb consisted of two sets of cells placed

back to back. If the bottoms of these opposite sets of cells had been exactly opposite to each other, they would have been dangerously thin ; and the architects, knowing this very well, arranged that the bottom of each cell should be opposite part of the bottoms of three cells on the other side of the comb.

In this manner, the thin plate of wax forming the bottom was in every case strengthened and supported by the bases of three contingent walls behind it. For the bees, having so well economized their space, were determined not to use an atom more wax than was really necessary.

“Let us be consistent all through,” they said, “and then we shall make a job of it.”

For nearly a week Buz stuck to her post, only going out occasionally. At the end of that time so much of the comb had been made, that she, with many others, was employed in gathering honey.

It was the beginning of June, there were plenty of flowers about, and the honey season was good. Things were looking up. Fortune, however, delights in a practical joke, and often, so to speak, cuts a hammock down when the owner is most comfortably asleep. A terrible accident happened to the bees, just at the time they seemed so prosperous.

Whether the heat within the hive became so great as to melt the wax, or whether the top of the hive was too smooth for the comb to be securely fastened thereto, it is impossible to say; but, whatever might be the cause, one of the center combs, nearly filled with honey, suddenly broke down, and fell to the bottom of the hive.

The result was dreadful! Numbers of bees were crushed to death or suffocated, the floor of the hive was deluged with honey, for the comb had not been sealed, and there was a barrier formed right in the line of traffic.

Luckily for her, Buz was away when the accident happened; and by the time she returned to the hive the bees were beginning to repair the mischief.

Their first care was to collect all the honey that had escaped, and to store it in the empty cells. After that they began to clear away the broken pieces of comb, and to carry out the dead.

"Of course we are not going to let that great comb stay where it is?" said Buz softly to an older bee.

"Of course we are, though," was the reply. "Why, what a waste of time it would be to carry all that wax away and make a fresh comb!"

"But it's so dreadfully in the way."

"We shall manage to get over that difficulty," said the bee confidently.

"How?" asked Buz.

"Ain't you supposed to be honey-gathering?"

"Yes, I am."

"Gather honey then, do! You'll be able to see for yourself, each time you come in, how we get on here. I can't waste time explaining."

Away flew Buz, and got honey as near the hive as she could, and worked particularly hard, so as to come in often; for she was very much interested in what was going on.

The fallen comb was leaning against an adjacent one, the bottom being of course on the floor instead of a little above it, thus impeding traffic. To obviate this, tunnels were soon driven through the comb—beautiful arched tunnels, with waxen pillars to support them—while little stays and buttresses of wax were introduced wherever they were required, to make all firm and safe again.

"Capital!" said Buz approvingly, as she ran through one of the new tunnels.

"No honey to be stored in this side of the comb," remarked a bee shortly.

"All right," said Buz.

Now Buz had nearly said "Why," instead of "All

right"; but checked herself in time, remembering that she had often asked unnecessary questions, and that she had resolved to try to find things out for herself. In this case she soon saw the reason why.

The comb was leaning over a little, and of course any honey put into a cell on the side toward which it leaned, would run out again.

"I'm glad I didn't ask," thought Buz; "and now that I'm about it, I'll just examine one of the other combs."

She did so, and found that the cells on each side sloped upward, ever so little, but enough to prevent thick stuff like honey from running out.

"Let me see," said Buz to herself, as she turned away, "how will they use the side that can't be employed for honey?"

Just at this moment there was a bustle close to her, and she saw the queen making toward the fallen comb.

"Oh, I know," thought Buz: "the queen will lay eggs in it; it will do very well for a breeding comb, of course."

Buz was right. The queen, with ten or twelve attendants round her, passed over the comb, examining each cell before she deposited an egg within

it. Whenever she rested, which she frequently did, the members of her suite, who formed a sort of screen round her, overwhelmed her with their attention and caresses, and offered her honey. In one cell the queen inadvertently deposited two eggs; the watchful attendants, much too polite to call her majesty's attention to this, quietly took one out and ate it.

After Buz had looked on for some little time, she asked one of the suite how many eggs the queen could lay in a day.

"A couple of hundred, or even more," was the answer.

"Does she often have an egg-laying day?"

"She lays eggs every day—for months. She does nothing else."

"Well," thought Buz as she flew off, "no wonder there are such a lot of us!"

For several weeks Buz worked very hard, and met with no adventures. It was *the* busy time, and a fine lot of honey was collected and sealed up.

One morning, as she was passing near the middle of the hive, she saw a good many bees employed on a large cell, which was attached to the comb only at one spot.

"Ah!" said Buz to herself, "I know what that is. That's a royal cell: I remember seeing some in the old hive."

She stood and watched, and presently observed to one of the workers, "What a lot of wax you are using, to be sure!"

"I should think so, indeed," was the reply. "I don't suppose you'd wish us to be careful of our wax when we're making a royal cell—that *would* be mean!"

"Oh, no!" cried Buz, "of course I shouldn't; only it seems funny, don't you know. Ever since I swarmed I have heard nothing but, 'Economize your space; economize your material'; and now, here you are, seeing how much wax you can get rid of at once! I like it myself, mind, only I can't help observing that there is enough wax there to make fifty ordinary cells."

"If I didn't think that there was," returned the other, "I should feel quite ashamed to be on the job. Bees don't economize where royalty is concerned."

She said this very stiffly, and walked away. Buz rubbed her head and antennæ with her fore legs, and felt rather snubbed.

Just at this moment there was a sudden movement

of bees upward, and Buz was off directly to see what was the matter.

On reaching the top of the hive, she joined a number of bees who were crowding through a hole in the roof, and found herself at once in a fine open space above. Here a bee was gesticulating excitedly with her antennæ, and Buz joined the group of listeners round her.

"All I know is," said the bee, "that I happened to be at work on the roof just underneath where this hole has appeared. Everything was quite secure, nothing loose at all. There was no passage up, not even a very little one—that I'm sure of; and then, all of a sudden there was! I heard a kind of a tearing, scraping sound, and it became quite light! I saw this hole, ran up as fast as I could, and found myself here. That's all I can tell you."

"But was there nothing moving near the top of the hole when you came through?" asked one of the bees.

"Certainly not: that's the odd part of it. Everything was as quiet as possible. Now, any one may account for it who can. I can't." *

As the bee moved away after saying this, Buz ran

* The gardener had drawn back the slide at the top of the hive, and placed a glass super in position for the bees to fill.

off on a tour of inspection. She found herself in a space about half the size of the hive below; the walls and roof were very slippery, and the light came through them.

She climbed up the side and got to the roof, but had hardly reached it when she lost her footing and fell with a flop on to the floor.

As she stood rather confused for a moment, a friend of hers came up and said, "Isn't this a piece of luck! We had nearly filled the place below with wax and honey, and now here's room for lots more."

"Yes," replied Buz; "I was wondering the other day what we should do for space: it was getting so hot, too."

"Oh, we should have been obliged to send off a swarm, I suppose, when a young queen was hatched; but now we shall get on without that."

"What shall we do with the young queen then?" demanded Buz.

"Oh, let the old one kill her, I suppose," said the bee unconcernedly, "or starve the royal grubs, or something. I don't know," she continued, "if eggs have been laid in the royal cells yet; I rather think not, in which case the queen won't lay any at all now."

As she spoke, something came down on her head with a great bump. It was a bee, who, like Buz, had tried the roof and had met with a similar mishap. The floor and sides of the new space were by this time covered with bees, and some were continually falling down.

"I can tell you what," said Buz sagaciously; "it will be very difficult work, fastening up our comb."

"It may be difficult, but it is not impossible. We shall therefore manage it," said the bee who had just fallen. "When we have fastened a few little specks of wax about, to hold on to, we shall be able to manage. I wish it wasn't quite so light, though; I like working in the dark."

She had hardly spoken the words, when something came down on the roof and round the walls, and in a moment the place was quite dark. *

"There!" said Buz; "you've got your wish: but what will happen next, I wonder?"

"Whatever happens, I shall begin to work at once," was the reply; "so, come on."

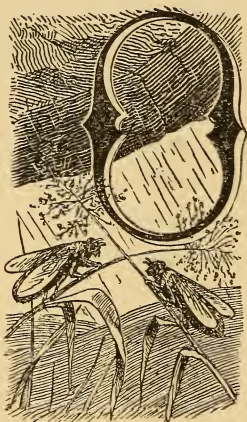
"Come on," said Buz.

*The gardener placed a cap of felt, or other thick material, over the super.



CHAPTER VI.

A SECOND SWARM. IDLE HOURS. SENT BACK.



NE day, when the heather was in bloom, Buz went off to Cothelestone Hill, and while she was at work a sudden shower came on.

This drove her for shelter under a rock, where she nearly ran against another bee, which had entered from the opposite direction.

"Hulloa!" cried Buz.

"Hulloa!" said the other;
"where do you come from? I don't know your smell."

"Very likely not," answered Buz, who did not

admire the manner of the other bee ; “ what of that ? I suppose I have as much right here as you ? ”

“ Don’t be waxy,” replied the other ; “ I said very little.”

“ But you didn’t say it nicely, I thought,” retorted Buz.

“ Well, you *are* particular ! ” exclaimed the other. “ How I should like to know where you come from.”

“ Oh, a long way from here,” said Buz : “ from the valley at the foot of the hill. We live in a garden, where there are several other swarms.”

“ How very odd ! ”

“ Why odd ? ” asked Buz.

“ Well, I suppose you’re *always* fighting ; and that’s an odd state of things, isn’t it ? ”

“ It would be, if it were the case ; but then you see it isn’t.”

“ That’s odder still. Now we should fight tremendously if another swarm came near us.”

“ Should you really ? ” asked Buz.

“ There’s a hollow tree not far from ours,” answered the other bee significantly ; “ take it and try.”

“ A hollow tree ! ” echoed Buz contemptuously ; “ I should be sorry to live in one.”

“ What do you live in, then ? ”

“ A hive, to be sure.”

"And what may that be?"

"Why, the house in which we were taken when we swarmed."

"Taken!" cried the wild bee. "Ah! I begin to understand: I've heard of that sort of thing before; then you're a slave bee, I suppose?"

"You're a rude bee, I'm sure," retorted Buz.

"Am I? I only mean, that the honey you make is not for yourselves, but for whoever shook you into the hive you seem so proud of."

"I should just like to see any one taking our honey," said Buz. "Whoever came to do it, would have to be very fond of honey, or care very little about stings."

"That sounds fine," replied the wild bee; "but I have heard some curious stories. Let me advise you to make a few inquiries when you return. I may be wrong, of course; but then, you know, I may be right."

"I don't mind asking about it," returned Buz; "but you *must* be wrong."

"Why so?" asked the wild bee.

"Because, if what you say is true, it is ridiculous to suppose that any bees would live as we do now. We should fly right away, of course, and even put up with a hollow tree, perhaps."

"That's all very well," answered the wild bee; "but when people once get into a groove, they are slow to get out of it: to make up one's mind to a thorough change, requires a deal of energy."

"Don't you call swarming a thorough change?" demanded Buz. "I found no difficulty in making up my mind about that."

"There you only followed an old custom, and did not strike out a new line. However, as the storm is over, suppose we go on with our work; mine being to gather honey for myself, and yours to gather it—for some one else."

"Put it as you please," replied Buz; "always remembering that I don't want your opinion."

"In the same way," answered the wild bee, "gather for whom you please; always remembering that I don't want your honey. Good-by." And away she flew.

As Buz followed her example, and went to work again, she could not help admitting to herself that there was something in what had been said. "When I get back to the hive," she thought, "I'll just talk the matter over."

In the evening, therefore, she asked one of the older bees whether what she had heard was true.

"No doubt it is," was the answer. "This very

spring, a fine super of honey was taken from the hive next to ours, and a lot of excitement it caused; surely you remember?"

"No, I don't," said Buz.

"It must have been just before you were hatched then."

"But what were they all about?" cried Buz, excitedly; "why did they let their honey go? Couldn't they sting?"

"I heard one of them say that they tried at first, and that something prevented them from getting near the robbers—something soft; and besides, there was so much honey running about, that they were busy sucking it up; and, what with the excitement and what with being gluttoned with honey, very few of them felt like fighting."

"Then my rude acquaintance at the top of the hill was not very far from right after all," said Buz thoughtfully.

"She was right to a certain extent, but there's another side to the question."

"Indeed," cried Buz; "I should like to know it."

"The tradition is, that those who rob us look after us in the winter, and supply us with food if our honey runs short; so we need never starve. Now, I *have* heard, that after a bad honey season whole

swarms of wild bees are starved to death. Then again, our hive is much more convenient than a hollow tree : dryer and warmer, and with a better entrance. I've seen some pretty good hollow trees in my time, certainly ; but there's nothing like a hive after all."

Buz was somewhat consoled by this, but still felt indignant at the idea of being liable to lose any of the beautiful honey she had worked so hard for.

"Wait till some one tries it on with us," said she to herself. "Not sting, indeed! We'll see about that."

Soon after this, Buz began to find her present hive almost as inconveniently crowded as the one she had left ; the super was nearly filled with comb, and that was half full of honey ; the queen had laid a great many eggs in the hive below, and the young bees were daily emerging from their cells.

Some of the grubs, also, in the royal cells were nearly ready to come out.

A feverish excitement, similar to that which she remembered on a former occasion, began to set in, and the queen frequently squeaked.

This time, however, Buz made up her mind to remain where she was.

"I'm getting too old," she told herself, "for

knocking about ; let the youngsters do the swarming."

But although she was inclined to be patronizing toward the "youngsters," she could not help feeling surprised at her disinclination for change and excitement ; she was even a little sorry for herself.

The fact is, she had become a middle-aged bee, and was beginning to go down the hill—a fact which it is not always pleasant to look in the face.

And now the queen became more excited than ever, and sometimes attempted to tear open the royal cells and kill the poor little princesses. She was prevented from doing so by the royal nurses, who were respectful, but very firm.

"Though it's a tremendous thing, mind you," said one nurse to the other, "to find oneself tackling the queen herself, and preventing her from doing what she likes."

"It certainly is," said the other ; "but she knows it is only our duty."

Opinions in the hive began to differ as to whether it would be better to let the queen kill the young ones, or to send off a swarm. Some thought it was too late in the year ; others declared that any thing would be better than being so crowded.

A particularly hot day settled the question, and

those who were in favor of a swarm "had it." Then began the same sort of orderly confusion described before, and away flew the queen, with many of her loving subjects, but without Buz.

After the swarm had left, the latter felt disinclined to work: she was a little upset, and wanted a gossip.

There was no difficulty in finding a bee similarly disposed, for work in the hive was slack that afternoon.*

"Bother the pollen," grumbled a bee, as she was passing Buz; "how it does stick to one, to be sure; but this is the last lot I bring in this blessed day. My name is 'easy' for the rest of the afternoon."

"And so is mine," cried Buz; "let us go to the garden, and sit in the sun."

"All right," said the other; "just wait till I unload; I won't be a minute."

As soon as she returned, the two bees flew off together.

"We are not the only ones who are taking it easy," observed her friend to Buz, as they settled comfortably on a cucumber frame in a corner; "I

* It is a fact that bees do not work so hard after a swarm has left; and it is sometimes necessary to send it back to the hive, in order that a half-filled super may be completed. If the queen be caught and removed, the swarm will return.

heard several bees say they intended to knock off work."

"After all," she continued, "why should we take any more trouble. We had nearly made honey enough to carry us through the winter, and now we shall not want so much, in consequence of that swarm having gone off."

"Exactly so," replied Buz; "we have enough, and to spare. I don't mean to say," she continued, after a pause, "that I intend to do nothing at all—that wouldn't suit me; but I do *not* mean to hurry up. I've worked pretty well all through the summer, though I say it myself, and made honey enough to support half a dozen drones. By the by, talking of drones, why *should* I make honey for those lazy fellows?"

"Can't say," replied her friend; "I don't see the fun of it myself. But, do you know," she continued, sinking her voice, "I hear they are not likely to eat much more honey in *our* hive."

"What do you mean?" asked Buz. "The stupid great things are always hungry. 'The less I do, the more I want,' seems, in fact, to be their motto."

"Well, what I tell you is quite between ourselves, of course," said her friend; "but, mark my words—we shall get rid of them, and that before long."

"Oh, my queen!" cried Buz. "You astonish me! How shall we manage it?"

"The working bees will rise against them, and turn them out of the hive; see if they don't. Why should we keep them all through the winter? That's what I want to know."

"Why indeed?" said Buz hastily; and then continued after a pause: "If we *do* get rid of them, there is all the more reason for our taking a little holiday now; for we shall have plenty of honey."

"My sentiments exactly," returned her friend; "but as I feel inclined for a little on my own account, I shall have a turn at the flower-beds. What do you say?"

"Come on," said Buz, and away they flew.

Later on, when they returned to the hive, they were surprised to see a great commotion, and crowds of bees pouring in.

"What is all this bustle about?" asked Buz of the first bee she encountered. "Is any thing the matter?"

"Ever so much," was the answer. "There has been an accident, and the swarm that left so lately is returning."

"Indeed!" cried Buz; "but what accident could possibly induce the old queen to come back?"

"Nothing would ever have induced her to do such a thing," replied the other; "but"—and here she spoke very impressively—"she has disappeared!"

"Disappeared!" echoed Buz. "Oh, how? Do tell me more about it."

"If you want to know the particulars, ask one of those who joined the swarm: I didn't."

Buz lost no time in following her advice.

"I'll tell you all I know," said the bee she questioned, "but I can't quite understand it myself. Our poor queen settled on a branch of a small apple tree, and we all clung round her of course; and there we hung in a big bunch—in such a big bunch, that I really thought the branch we were on would come off. After a short time, something gave such a jerk that we all fell off into something, and it was very uncomfortable. Most of us kept crawling about, not liking to leave the queen; but some flew up, to see what was the matter."

"I should have been one of those," put in Buz.

"Well, so was I, my dear; and I found that the thing that had done it was the man we always see about the garden, and the thing he had shaken us into was a kind of box like this."

"I know," said Buz; "that's just what happened to me. Well?"

"Well, the man carried us off to where something large and white was lying on the ground, and upset us on to it, and we all began to run about." *

"Hulloa!" interrupted Buz: "*that* didn't happen to me."

"I had joined the others in the box," continued the bee, "just in time to be upset; and found myself close to the queen, who did not attempt to fly, but kept on crawling in underneath us, wherever we were thickest. Presently the man began to paddle among us with his hands, and he rolled us about a good deal, I can tell you; but he was not rough enough to hurt us, and we really were too much astonished to be angry. This went on for some time, when all of a sudden I missed the queen. I ran about, asking every one, 'Have you seen the queen? Have you seen the queen?' And presently I came across others asking the same question. We didn't know what to do, or what to think, and there we were, hunting round and round. At last, a bee who had been near the queen at the moment, told us

* The gardener had spread a sheet on the ground, on which to shake out the bees, in order the more easily to find the queen.

that she had seen her caught up between two great things, and that she had disappeared all in a moment—that was all she could tell us.”

“But what was that bee about?” cried Buz. “Surely she did something?”

“She said it was all so sudden and unexpected, that she didn’t know what to do. She thought it must be the man; but he was walking quietly away, and by the time she had recovered herself, and made *sure* that the queen was gone, it was too late to do any thing.”

“Oh dear! but this is all very bad,” said Buz. “What next?”

“Why, the next thing we did was to come back here. You see,” added the bee apologetically, “we had no queen, no honey, and no hive; so what were we to do?”

“I don’t know,” answered Buz; “but *I* should have felt ashamed to return.”

“So did we; we felt *very much* ashamed, and have had to listen to all sorts of disagreeable remarks since; but what *were* we to do, you know—no queen, no honey, and no hive! What on earth were we to do?”

The bee moved off as she said these words, and went away grumbling to herself: “It’s all very

well ; but what *were* we to do, I should like to know ? ”

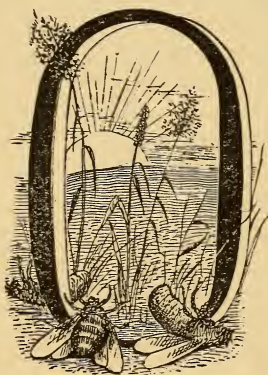
Buz, having no answer ready, let her go, but felt a good deal put out by what had happened, and very much inclined to do something to somebody.





CHAPTER VII.

DISCONTENTED WHISPERS. A STORMY DISPUTE.
THE MASSACRE OF THE DRONES.



ON the following morning, the hive seemed to Buz very inconveniently crowded; and not being in the best of tempers, she was disgusted to find the passage along which she was hurrying between the combs, nearly blocked by a lot of drones.

"Bother the lazy things," said she to herself, as she pushed past them; "I've no patience with them."

"No more have I," cried another bee, who happened to overhear her, "and I'm glad to find you're of the same opinion. But I can tell you what it is," she continued, when they had reached the entrance, "there is quite a strong feeling growing up against them, and they had better look out for themselves."

"Ah!" said Buz; "I'm not surprised at what you say; I heard only yesterday that they were likely to have a bad time of it soon."

"It is getting to be the common talk of the hive," said the other; "and now that the swarm which left us yesterday has returned, we shall want more room and more honey than we expected."

"As for honey," said Buz, "that's very true. I had not intended to work much more; but now, I suppose we must fill every bit of comb we have made."

"And as for room," said the other bee, "I think I can tell you how we shall get that."

She spoke very slowly and deliberately, and tapped Buz's antennæ with her own in a very meaning way.

"I understand you," said Buz. "Down with the drones, say I."

"When the time comes," replied the other, mysteriously.

"Just so," assented Buz; "when the time comes."

With this understanding they parted, and Buz began work again in earnest, stowing the honey she collected in the glass super. All the other bees did the same, and were as busy as ever they had been before the swarm went off.

Every day, however, honey became more and more difficult to get, and the combs filled slowly.

This, again, was bad for the drones; for the scarcer honey was, the more valuable did the stores already collected appear to the bees, who at last could scarcely bear to see a drone go near a honey-cell.

The latter, however, appeared not to observe how unpopular they were becoming, and went about the hive as usual.

But the time expected came at last! One day, as Buz, who had just returned to the hive with some honey, was storing it away in the super, she overheard a dispute between a drone and a working bee.

"No, you shall not," cried the latter, "not while I am here."

"Get out of the way, can't you," answered the drone.

"I can, but I won't," replied the other.

"Do you suppose I care for you?" cried the drone. "I want some honey, and I mean to have it."

"Then take it from a cell already opened," answered the working bee, "and don't break into a new comb."

"I shall take it," said the drone deliberately, "from any comb and from any cell I choose."

"If you can," retorted the other.

"Who's to prevent me, I should like to know?"

"I, for one."

"You, indeed!" cried the drone angrily. "How dare you talk in that saucy way to one of the queen's husbands."

"Queen's fiddlesticks!" replied the other contemptuously. "The queen does not want a lot of idle, good-for-nothing fellows like you loitering about the hive, I can tell you. Go and ask her."

"No, I shall not," replied the drone sulkily.

"I knew you wouldn't; you dare not go near her; she never takes any notice of you now, and is tired of your idle habits, as indeed we all are."

Here there was a hum of approval from a small crowd of workers, who had collected as the dispute went on.

"Well, I don't care," said the drone. "I'm tired

of standing here, that's all I know ; so ' out of the way,' I say again, for I mean to have the honey."

"Out of this cell, which I have just sealed up, you don't get it," returned the other firmly.

"For my part, I don't see why he should get it from any cell in the hive," remarked a bee who was standing near Buz.

"Hulloa!" cried the drone, turning angrily round on the last speaker; "and pray who may *you* be?"

"One who earns her honey before she eats it," was the reply.

"Well said, indeed!" cried the bee with whom the drone had been disputing.

As the drone turned indignantly round again, he bumped against Buz, who instantly ran at him, and gave him a good push, which sent him against another bee.

"Now then, where are you shoving to?" cried the latter, pushing him back. "Get out of the way."

"He's always in the way!" cried one.

"And always eating!" said another.

"Why don't you go out and get your own honey?" demanded a third.

"I don't choose to leave the hive, except in the very finest weather," replied the drone.

"Here's a pretty fellow for you," cried Buz; "he

doesn't *choose*, indeed!" And she gave him another push.

"I vote we turn him out," cried another bee, pushing him back.

"Yes, and keep him out," said a third.

"Out with him!" cried several bees at once.

"Down with the drones! Out with them! Turn them all out!" was the general cry.

And the drone, now beginning to be really frightened, was pushed backward and forward in the midst of a crowd of workers. At last, in answer to the cries, Buz and another bee caught firmly hold of the drone, and began dragging him toward the entrance.

But he was strong and heavy, and did not want to go at all, and struggled hard.

"Push behind there," cried the bee who was helping Buz.

"Not all of you, though," added Buz. "Are there no other drones in the hive?"

This produced new cries of "Out with them!" "Down with the drones!" "Turn them out!" and parties of bees, hastening in every direction through the hive, fastened on the drones, and dragged them toward the entrance.

As he was being pulled and pushed round a corner,

the drone with whom Buz was occupied got such a firm hold, that he resisted for a long time all efforts to dislodge him.

"If nothing else will do," panted the bee who was helping Buz, "I'll just slip my sting into him: that will soon settle the fellow."

"Oh, give the poor wretch a chance," said Buz. "It seems a shame to sting him, as he has no sting himself."

"All right then," returned her friend; "but we shall be a long time clearing the hive at this rate."

"Now," cried Buz, "all together!" and, making a grand effort, they dislodged the drone, and got him on to the floor of the hive. Thence, by dint of pulling and pushing, and tumbling over and dragging him, they at last reached the footboard outside.

"Now," said they, "clear off!"

"Where?" said the drone. "Oh, dear me! Where?"

"Anywhere you like," was the reply. "You want honey, don't you? There's the whole world before you, and plenty of flowers in it; so be off."

"But at night," cried the drone, "when it gets dark and cold, what shall I do then?"

"Whatever you like," answered the bees. "We don't seem to care very much."

"But I shall die! I shall die; I know I shall!" cried the drone piteously.

"Very likely; but that isn't our business, so good-bye. We really can't stand here arguing with you all day."

"Please let me in again; do let me in," pleaded the drone. "I would creep away into a corner, and do nobody any harm."

"Oh, yes, you would; for, without being of any use, you would take up a certain amount of room, and eat a certain amount of honey, and we have none of either to spare. Now go."

But the drone seemed too much overcome to move, and lay helplessly down, close to the edge of the footboard.

Buz and the other bees pushed him over, and, hardly making an effort to fly, he fell to the ground and remained there.

At this time the scene was most exciting: there were parties of bees in every direction. Some were carrying the dead bodies of drones who had made so much resistance, that, losing patience with them, their captors had stung them to death. Others dragged along unresisting victims; and others again were engaged with obstinate drones, who fought and tumbled the whole way. Some of the drones took

wing of their own accord the moment they were released on the footboard ; others behaved like the one that Buz had first taken out ; and, allowing themselves to be pushed over the edge of the footboard, lay among the bodies of those that had been killed.

At last the hive was quite cleared of them.

"Double the sentries, and admit no drones," were the orders given.

But none dared to return ; the night came on cold and wet, and before the sun rose next morning every drone was dead.





CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH OF HUM. ROBBERY. RESTITUTION.



OR the next few days Buz kept steadily at work, and the combs in the super were at last filled and sealed up. They were quite beautiful! clean, regular, and of a golden straw color: the wax was thin and transparent; and as no eggs had been laid in the super, it was all virgin honey—a perfect picture!

Buz had now plenty of leisure, but she spent a good deal of her time in the hive; for the days began to get short, and the nights long and cold, and the sun himself was lazy about getting up in the morning.

And Buz began to feel that the bright beautiful summer of her life was over too; and she remembered with tenderness the lovely mornings she had known, when the sun, streaming early into the hive, had tempted her away to flowery fields and pleasant gardens; when the dew-drops, sparkling so brightly on the gossamer webs, seemed strings of fairy diamonds; and when the flowers, fresh from their night's rest, lifted up their heads and shook out their petals, and offered her all their store of honey; and then she thought of Hum, dear, gentle Hum, in whose company she had enjoyed her first experiences.

"I declare I will go to the old hive again, as soon as I can," said she to herself, "and try to find out how she is getting on. They won't let me in, I suppose; but I may hear something of her. I quite long to see her once more."

So the very next day, when the sun shone out for a time, Buz paid a visit to her former home.

What was her disappointment, however, to find that the old hive was gone!

As she approached, and was about to alight on the footboard, a sight met her eyes that caused her to dart aside. On the board itself, and lying in heaps upon the ground beneath, were thousands of dead

bees. Pieces of breeding-comb were lying about, and a sickly smell filled the air all round. It was a hideous wreck—a pitiable end!

“What horrible thing can have happened?” thought Buz, as she flew wildly about. “And what can have become of poor dear Hum? When I remember the orderly life we used to lead here, the busy work, the watchful sentries, the combs full of promising grubs, and the rich stores of beautiful honey, how terrible this change appears! It is too sad—too dreadful!”

But after the first feeling of terror, her anxiety to find out something about Hum overcame every other consideration, and she alighted on the footboard. Tremblingly she approached a heap of bees—they were indeed dead!—stiff, cold, and in many cases clogged with honey that had escaped when the hive was torn from its stand.

But not *all* dead—not *quite* all. Here and there she saw a faint motion, as a bee gave a weary struggle with her legs, or moved her antennæ. Hurrying from one to another, Buz came at last to a bee which had evidently crept into an empty cell to die; and a thrill passed through her as she touched her antennæ, and discovered the object of her search.

Yes, it was indeed Hum! and she was not too late

to say "good-by," for Hum recognized and feebly caressed her.

"Oh, Hum!" cried Buz; "dear Hum! What has happened? What can I do for you, my poor darling?"

And she began to lick her with her tongue, and to stroke her softly.

"Dear old Buz," whispered Hum faintly; "how good of you to come! I shall die quite happy now, if you will stay with me for a little time—such a little time."

"I will *never* leave you!" cried Buz impetuously. "Let me die with you, if you *must* die; but surely it isn't so bad as that. I can not bear to lose you. Let me get you some honey; let me do *something* for you."

"You can do nothing, dear; I am past eating; only come close to me. There! I want nothing more now."

"But what has happened, Hum? My dear, dear Hum! Who can have been so cruel? Are you strong enough to tell me?"

"I will try," answered Hum; "I should like you to know. Last evening I was out late, for I wanted to finish filling the very last cell there was to be filled. A shower of rain came on, and I crept into

a hole for shelter. This made me later still, and when I got back I found the entrance of the hive closed, and smoke coming out from every crevice. Two men were standing close by; the smoke made me feel sick and giddy; presently the men pulled the hive from the board. Oh, Buz! it was dreadful to see them shake out the dead bees in heaps. Some of the honey came out, and they pulled out the breeding comb. Only to think how many grubs, which would soon have become busy bees, have been destroyed! Only to think how much honey they would have collected next spring! It is very, very sad. For myself, dear, I think I had done my work; I am getting to feel quite old, and could hardly have expected to live through the winter. Ah!" she continued more faintly, "how long and cold the night has been! I found this empty cell and crept into it, or I must have died hours ago. A few other bees, who, like me, had not returned before the hive was filled with smoke, were going about at first, but I have seen none moving lately. Where are you, Buz, dear? Where are your antennæ? It is *so* dark and *so* cold."

"I am quite, quite close to you, my poor Hum!" said Buz. "Can't you see and feel me?"

"No, no," answered Hum in a whisper; "it is too

dark and cold for that. I am going, dear—I am going fast. You have been so often in my thoughts ; you make me so happy now. Good-by, dear ! good-by ! ”

As she ceased, a shiver convulsed her for a moment, her antennæ quivered once more, and—her busy, useful life was over.

For some time Buz remained by her side ; she could not bear to leave her friend ; but at last she flew sorrowfully away.

“ It would do poor Hum no good,” she thought, “ if I staid in that miserable place. What a sad story it is ! and how cruel ! Not only hundreds of bees, that have worked hard all their lives, are rewarded by thus being killed, but hundreds of grubs are prevented from ever doing the work they would have done so well. If I meet the wild bee again, I shall not have much to say. I begin to understand that there may be advantages in a hollow tree, after all.”

So saying, she went disconsolately home.

But misfortunes never come singly, and Buz had hardly settled herself in a corner of the super, when she became aware, by a sudden commotion among the bees near the aperture which led down to the hive below, that something unusual was taking place.

Buz ran down the comb at once, and found a crowd of bees collected round the place where the aperture had been: there was no aperture now!

A zinc slide, worked from the outside, had been pushed across, cutting off all communication from below; and a bee, who had been ascending at the time, had been caught and crushed to death.

At this moment the covering of the super was removed, and a flood of light admitted.

Then there was running and bustling indeed! Every part of the glass was explored again and again, and each bee continually revisited the slide, in hopes of finding it removed.

But no—they were completely cut off! The only way out of the super had been through the hive below, and that way was closed.

The bees grew very angry—particularly Buz!

“Ah, my fine fellow!” said she to herself, as she ran up and down, looking through the glass at the gardener outside, “just you wait till I’m out; I’ve something more than honey for you!”

The more angry and excited the bees became, however, the hotter grew the hive.

Many of them began to fan violently; but that did no good, because no cool air from the outside could be obtained.

"I shall be choked," said a bee to Buz, as she passed her; "I know I shall."

"I shouldn't mind what happened to me afterward," cried Buz, almost beside herself, "if I could go at that man, and make him run."

It became hotter and hotter.

The bees began to get frightened, and hardly knew what they did.

Many of them went to the honey for consolation, and ate as fast as they could.

Even Buz, in spite of her fury, couldn't help feeling anxious.

The man outside now passed a thin, sharp knife between the edge of the super and the top of the hive on which it stood. He was obliged to do this, because the bees, when they first took possession of it, had cemented it down with a kind of resin. In spite of all his care, some little honey escaped, and one or two bees were injured.

Now Buz, although she had determined to take no honey, found it impossible to keep her resolution when she saw it actually running at her feet, and, in a feverish excited way, she began to suck it up. This made her feel a *little* less spiteful, but she still kept her eyes on the enemy outside.

The latter, having by this time loosened the super,

lifted up one side of it, and inserted a small wedge of wood, which gave the bees an opportunity of getting away.

Some of them, being still frightened, darted off at once, and entered the hive as usual. Others took a turn round, and then went back to the super, irresistibly attracted by the honey.

But Buz, the instant she was free, flew as straight as she could and as hard as she could at the man's nose, meaning to give him the full benefit of her sting. What was her astonishment and indignation on finding herself stopped, when close to his face, by something soft and yielding, which she had not noticed at first, and which she could hardly see, even when close to him!

Again and again she flew at him—at his ears, his chin, his nose—and each time she was prevented from getting within stinging distance. The most provoking part of it was, that the man did not take the least notice of her efforts, or seem even to know that she was trying to drive him away. One or two other bees had joined Buz in her attack on him, but, as he was quite safe behind his veil, they at last left him alone, and even Buz gave it up.

By this time the greater part of the bees had left

the super ; but a good many stragglers still remained, and feasted to excess on the honey.

In order to get rid of these, the gardener removed the super to some little distance, turned it upside down, and with a soft feather gently dislodged them, and though it took him some time, he at length persuaded the very last bee to fly heavily home.

Then he carried off the super in triumph.

Buz, on meeting a friend near the entrance of the hive, eagerly talked the matter over.

"Here's a pretty thing !" she exclaimed. "Were you up above when it happened ?"

"No ; I was down here."

"Why didn't you all come out and help, then," said Buz, "or do something ?"

"We couldn't think what had happened ; we have only one way of getting up, you know, and we kept on trying that. How we did try, to be sure !"

"Well," said Buz ; "between us all, we managed it about as badly as we could. Of course you know they have taken away that beautiful honey ?"

"Yes, and very provoking it is ; still, it's a mercy we have so much here."

"Yes, indeed," answered Buz ; "things might be worse than they are, I suppose." For she remem-

bered what had happened to poor Hum, and to her old home, and felt that she had still something to be thankful for.

Soon after this came a week of wet weather, and the bees were obliged to fall back on their stores.

"I do wish," said a bee one day, who was working near Buz, "that we hadn't lost all that honey. I declare I'm almost afraid to eat at all now."

"We have enough to last for a long time, at any rate," replied Buz; "and I *have* heard that food is sometimes supplied."

"Indeed!" said the other. "Who supplies it?"

"Ah!" replied Buz, with an important air—she was rather proud of being able to give information now, instead of, as formerly, always asking questions herself—"You will be surprised to hear that."

"The only thing that surprises me is that *any* one should supply it."

"I was told," said Buz, "by a bee who had heard it from a very old friend of hers, that the man who stole the honey will very likely try to make up for it by giving us some other food."

"That *would* be curious, I must say," admitted the other. "I wonder why he does it. Perhaps,"

she added, "he thinks we like it better than honey."

"Or, perhaps," answered Buz, with superior wisdom—it was a *very* young bee to whom she spoke—"he likes our honey better than the stuff he brings. Why, whatever is the matter with you?" she continued quickly, addressing a bee who had stopped, in passing, to rub her forelegs over her head, and to lick and clean herself. "You are all sticky and shiny, and there is such an odd smell about you."

"I hardly know myself," was the reply; "but something has happened up above, at the hole by which we used to get into the top part of the hive."

"Something is *always* happening up there!" cried Buz, pettishly.

"Now, keep your sting in!" returned the other. "As far as I can make out, there is no need to grumble; though I got more than I want of whatever it is, I can't say it's bad." She began to lick her forefeet again.

"I suppose," remarked Buz, "you wish me to understand something; can't you explain?"

"I know very little about it, I tell you," answered the other impatiently. "I was standing close to where the hole used to be, when there was a sudden

movement, and the light came through. I was running up to see what was going on, when something soft and sticky came down on top of me; I was half-smothered for a moment, and could not get away. At last I crawled off, and now I'm cleaning myself. And I still say," she added, as she passed her feet over her head and antennæ, "that it's by no means bad stuff."

Buz went at once to see what had happened. She found that the aperture, instead of being covered by the slide, was now filled up with a soft material, which bulged out in the middle, and was covered with drops of something sticky.*

Several bees were already sucking at these, and Buz followed their example. Whatever it might be, there was certainly no harm in it—it was sweet and pleasant to eat.

The best of it was, that as fast as the bees sucked up the drops, more were formed on the surface of the material; but the latter was too thick to allow them to fall right through: they only hung on, ready to be sucked.

"Come!" said Buz; "if this is how they supply

* A wide-necked bottle, containing a thick syrup of sugar and water, with a piece of flannel tied over the mouth, had been placed, inverted, over the hole.

us, we shall do very well: a capital notion, *I* call it, if they will only keep it going!"

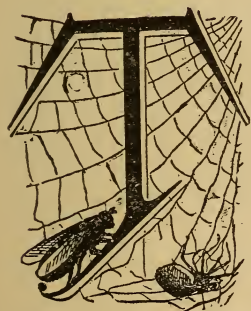
With this addition to their stores, the bees were able to look forward without apprehension to the long winter, which was so rapidly approaching.





CHAPTER IX.

CAUGHT IN A COBWEB. THE SPIDER'S PLAN.



HE days now began to grow very short; and when the rain fell, as it often did, it chilled the sodden ground, and was followed by cold, unhealthy fogs, instead of by the warm sweet smell that rises from the earth after a summer shower. The wind wailed dismally through the trees, stripping them of their many-colored leaves, and preparing them for rougher weather to come—as sailors take in canvas before the approach of a gale.

The few flowers that were left, were fading

quickly away, and the bees could hardly find enough honey for their own eating, during the short excursions they were able to make.

But there were still occasions when the clouds were content to linger along the horizon, and let the sun take a peep at the world; and although his rays were comparatively weak and watery, they were sometimes pleasant enough to tempt the bees out of their hive.

Buz seldom neglected such opportunities, and was fond of exploring places which she hardly had time to notice during the busy season of the honey harvest.

There was a pretty old cottage, with a thatched roof, standing a little way back from the lane leading from the manor house to the village.

It stood by itself, some way from any other habitation, and in front of it there was a little garden, beautifully kept.

Buz had often visited it during the summer, and had always fancied that its flowers were particularly sweet and full of honey. No wonder if they were, for the poor old man who lived in the cottage was very fond of them.

He kept them free from weeds, and watered them daily, in hot weather, with the sparkling water of a

little spring just across the lane, which was almost hidden by ferns and mosses, and which sent down a tiny rill, wandering through watercresses and marsh marigolds and long waving grasses, to join the merry mill-stream at the bottom of the hill.

One day, Buz, after taking a sip of water at the spring, flew to the top of the little garden gate, and thence right into the cottage through the open window.

This she did because her wings happened to carry her there.

It was the first time she had ever entered a room ; and, after taking a turn round, the sight of so many things which were new to her caused her to feel nervous, and she made for the window. Unfortunately, however, there were two windows in the room, and Buz darted to the wrong one, which was shut ! Against this she flew at such a pace, that for a moment she was quite confused, and taking another turn, came back and bumped herself once more, though not quite so hard.

Hard enough, however, to make her feel a little cross ; and so she buzzed noisily about, going over every pane several times—more slowly and carefully as she went up, but coming down again in a great hurry.

"Well!" said Buz to herself; "this *is* a nasty jar! I came in here—that I know for certain—and as I came in, I suppose I can get out. I *will* get out—I won't be sealed up like this!" And in a sudden fit of impatience, she buzzed so fiercely against the window that she turned herself head over heels once or twice, and came to the bottom anyhow.

There she remained for a moment, rubbing her antennæ, and considering matters.

Then off she went again, right up to the top of the window.

"I'll explore every corner," she said. "I'll try over and over again! I *will not* be beaten! I'll——"

Here there was a most tremendous buzzing; for, right up in one of the top corners, she was caught in a large and dusty cobweb!

Never in her life had Buz been so angry and indignant! She lost all control over herself, and buzzed, and bit, and struggled, and felt all round for something to sting.

There was nothing, however, but the soft, yielding cobweb; and the more she struggled, the more it stuck! and the more she turned, the more it twisted! and the more she rolled, the more it

wrapped round her! and the angrier she got, the more aggravating it became!

At last she was quite exhausted, and lay still.

Now when she had cooled down a little, she began to see that she had not gone the right way to work.

"How foolish of me!" said she to herself. "Just what a great drone might have done! If I had taken it quietly at first, I might perhaps have got out; but what will happen now, I can't think. What a fool I *have* made of myself, to be sure!"

"Ho! Ho!" cried a deep sarcastic voice close by.

Buz looked round, startled, and saw a great big spider near her on the web.

He was horrible to look at, with his cruel, blood-thirsty expression, but seemed perfectly composed, and fixed his wicked, hungry eyes steadily on Buz. For a moment the latter was quite paralyzed with fear, but, recovering a little, made some frantic efforts to free herself. These, however, were unsuccessful, and she again lay still, exhausted by her struggles.

"Ho! Ho!" cried the spider again.

By this time Buz had recovered from her first shock of horror, and her blood was up. Besides, she

felt quite a match for the spider, if it came to a fight.

"Is that all you've got to say?" asked Buz scornfully.

"Ho! Ho!" repeated the spider, for the third time.

He said it in such a cold-blooded manner, and seemed so triumphant and confident, that a thrill of horror again ran through her; but, shaking off the feeling, she said:

"I suppose you made this nasty web, didn't you?"

The spider answered never a word.

"In any case," continued Buz, "you might as well unwind me. I'm not a poor fly, you know, that you can kill and eat. Besides, your web is all torn," continued she, as the spider sat without moving or speaking—only watching; "and you'll have to mend it, you know, if you want to catch any thing. You can't mend it while I am here; I'll take care of that!"

The spider neither moved nor spoke. This continued silence disconcerted Buz very much, and made her feel dreadfully helpless; but she presently continued as briskly as she could:

"Come, come; I'm sure we can arrange matters in a sensible way, without any professions of friend-

ship. You want to mend your web; very good. I'm not anxious to stay in it, and you can do nothing while I am here. Give me your assistance, then, and I will go quietly away without hurting you. Come, what do you say?"

The spider partly opened his mouth, as if about to speak, but ended by saying nothing.

His appearance, however, was so terrifying, and his fangs looked so cruel, that Buz could hardly prevent her voice from trembling as she continued, "Have you any argument against what I propose? Tell me that, at any rate."

The spider spoke at last, and as he slowly moved his jaws, his fangs swept round like scythes.

"You are my prisoner," said he: "that's my argument."

He spoke with such contemptuous confidence, that Buz was struck dumb for the moment, and could think of nothing to say.

"A good argument, too," continued the spider; "good enough for me."

There was a long pause, during which Buz struggled hard to throw off the feeling of dismay which had crept over her.

"At any rate," she said at last; "if I am unable to get out, you, on the other hand, dare not come

near me ; so I don't know which of us would get the worst of it in the end."

"I do," returned the spider, "and you *will before long*."

He said this with such a sneer, that Buz's brave little spirit rose, and she answered quite sharply : "You seem very well satisfied with your own opinion, Mr. Spider ; but mine may be just as good—perhaps better. And I say that I can go quite as long without food as you can, and that you dare not come near me. No, you daren't, you brute !" she continued, as the spider again half opened his mouth without speaking.

"You hungry-looking wretch !" she went on, "if you were not afraid of me, you would have rushed upon me long ago, and dragged me into your den ; but you *are* afraid, you sneaking coward !"

"If I could only put him in a passion," she thought, "so as to make him come at me, we might fight it fairly out, and I could bear whatever happened ; but to lie helplessly here is dreadful."

"My plan is——" remarked the spider, after a long silence. "By the way, would you like to know what it is ?"

"Not I !" cried Buz disdainfully. "What are your plans to me ?"

The spider said no more, but moving off to his den, which was close by, settled himself at the mouth of it, and remained perfectly motionless, with his eyes fixed on Buz.

The latter was silent for some time, but although she tried to keep it out of her head, she could not help wondering what the spider's plan was. This thought returned again and again, and each time with greater strength, till at last it became a perfect torment to her. Several times she was on the point of asking, but just managed to prevent herself from doing so.

At last she could restrain the inclination no longer, and said, though as defiantly as she could :

"I might be able to show you the folly of your plan, as you call it ; so you had better tell me what it is, after all."

"If you ask me as a favor, I'll tell you," replied the spider ; "not else."

"Indeed, I shall ask no favor from you !" cried Buz.

The spider making no reply to this, there was a prolonged silence ; but at last, the feeling of anxiety to know the worst, overcame her pride, and Buz said more humbly, "Well then, I ask you as a favor."

"My plan is," said the spider, speaking very slowly and deliberately, "to do nothing yet myself, and to leave you to do what you can. It will answer very well, because you will soon get too weak for mischief, and then I shall kill you and suck you dry, and tear you limb from limb. That's my plan."

"Pray, how do you know," said Buz, "that I shall get weak sooner than you?"

"How foolishly you talk!" replied the spider. "Why, you are nearly exhausted, and half choked already; you are in a terrible fright, and well you may be, for you have nothing to look forward to but death. I am quite comfortable, even enjoying myself, watching you; and I look forward to dinner: it makes a good deal of difference."

Buz felt that this was only too true, and her heart began to fail her, brave as she was.

"Besides," continued the spider, "I dined well yesterday on a fat fly, whose wings you can see here at the mouth of my den, as you call it; so I can easily wait for you. I shall not have to wait very long."

Buz could not help trembling at these cruel words, and after a pause, she said, in a weaker voice, "I suppose it would be in vain to appeal to your generosity—to your——"

"To my generosity!" interrupted the spider. "Ho! Ho! That's good, that is! Why, I have never, in all my life, granted an appeal, or a favor, and I never mean to. It is true," he continued, "that I told you my plan, *as a favor*, but I only did so in order to punish you for the ridiculous airs you gave yourself at first. The punishment has already begun, I see. I knew it would! And you begged me to tell you as a favor! That's good, that is! Ho! Ho!"

The malicious cruelty with which he spoke was enough to freeze her blood; but even at that moment poor little Buz did not lose her pluck.

"He shall not triumph over me," she thought, "more than I can possibly help. I will not say another word, nor attempt to move him to pity. Let the worst come to the worst, I can but die! And if he ventures near me before I am *quite* gone, let him look out for himself!"

So she remained perfectly still; and the spider sat motionless at the mouth of his den, watching.

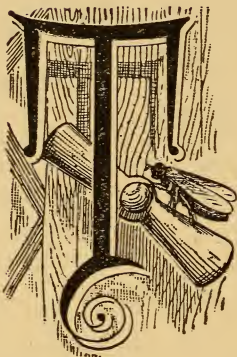


CHAPTER X.

BATTLE.

VICTORY.

DEATH.



THE nice tidy little old man who lived in the cottage, had a nice tidy little old wife. They had no children, and as he had earned good wages all his life at the mill down below in the village, they had put by a nice tidy little sum of money.

Of this, the kind old people had promised to give twenty pounds to their nephew Jack, who was on the point of leaving the old country, and going off to seek his fortune as an emigrant.

As it had been arranged that Jack should call for his money next day, the old man had been over to

the neighboring town to draw it out of the Savings bank ; and while poor Buz remained a prisoner in the cobweb, the old couple sat by the fire, counting out the yellow gold which it had taken them so long to collect, but which they were giving away with such ready generosity.

It looked so bright and beautiful—quite tempting!

Tempting? Yes, indeed; too tempting by far!

For as they were counting it over, a face appeared at the window outside.

It was an evil face, deeply carved by many vices—drunkenness, cruelty, theft, and even bloodshed having stamped their ugly marks upon it.

It was the face of a convict recently discharged from prison, who, coming to the cottage to see what he could pick up, was having a stealthy look round before knocking at the door.

As his cruel, cunning eyes peered into the room, they suddenly caught sight of the money, which had been counted out on a small round table in front of the fire.

The instant he saw it, he crouched down, hiding himself as well as he was able, and devouring the gold with hungry eyes.

After a time, the old man took up the pieces one

by one, and dropped them into a stocking, which he placed under the pillow of the bed.

Directly the convict had seen where the stocking was hidden away, he dropped on his hands and knees, and crept to the garden gate, opening which as quietly as he could, he slunk out into the lane, and stole away unobserved.

But before he had gone far he stopped, and clenching his hands, swore a horrible oath that he would have the gold that night, even if he did murder to obtain it.

Meanwhile, the cruel spider was getting very hungry; for when he told Buz that he had lately eaten a fat fly, he told her what was false.

The fact is, he had eaten nothing for a very considerable time, and the wings he had pointed out were those of a miserable victim devoured long since.

So now he was becoming impatient, and had twice left his den to see if Buz was yet weak enough to be attacked with impunity.

On both occasions, however, she had seen his approach, and had made such a struggle to free herself, that he had been frightened back.

But the third time he came, Buz lay perfectly still, and to all appearance dead. Several times the spi-

der made ready to attack her, but each time his heart failed him. At last—desperate with hunger—he rushed upon her, and seizing her in his jaws, began to drag her toward his den, taking the greatest care not to put himself within reach of her sting.

But Buz was not nearly so weak as he thought her, and had only remained quiet in order to deceive him.

The moment, therefore, that he made his attack, she clung tightly to him with her forelegs to prevent his getting away. Then began a fearful struggle! The spider tried to hold her down with his terrible fangs, and to prevent her from twisting her body round; and she, though weak and half-strangled, never lost heart, but battled bravely on, seeking for an opportunity.

After some time, she managed to break one of the threads which held her, and then another, and at last, turning over with a great effort, she brought her body alongside the spider, and shooting out her sting sideways, she drove it fairly into him.

The effect was instantaneous! The spider let go his hold, and curled completely up; then, as the poison took effect, his limbs again relaxed, and he lay dead, ulmost at the mouth of his own den.

Dead! where he had killed so many victims him-

self. Dead! where he had so lately mocked at Buz in her misery!

Just at this moment, the good wife, attracted by the sound of the struggle, during which Buz had made a sharp whirring with her wings, approached the window and called out to her husband, "Well, to be sure! if there isn't a poor little bee in a spider's web! Come and look, John."

"So there be," said John, as he came up.

"And only see, John, she've a killed the spider, I do declare!"

"Well done!" said John; "so she have, I see."

"Poor little creetur!" said the old woman, as she released Buz with a feather, and put her on the window-sill.

For some time they watched Buz, who at first was too much exhausted to free herself from the web which still clung to her; but, gradually recovering her strength, and receiving occasional help from the feather, she was able to do so at last.

"There!" said the old man; "let her bide till to-morrow morning. The room is nice and warm, and 'tis too late to turn her out to-night."

So they left her there, and drew the curtains, and put the kettle on, and had tea, and in due time went to bed.

Buz crept about a little to stretch her legs, and finally settled herself for the night on the handle of the lattice window.

Ten o'clock sounded from the belfry of the old church down in the village—eleven o'clock—midnight—and the old couple were sleeping soundly. But if they had been awake soon after midnight, they would have heard a stealthy, scraping sound! What was it?

It was the convict, engaged in removing the lead round one of the panes of glass close to the handle of the window. The knife that he was using was curved, and strong, and sharp; and in his hands, and close to the cruel face that was bending over the work, it had a murderous look.

A hammer with a long handle, such as is used for breaking stones, stuck out from his coat pocket.

He wore no mask—that was not necessary; for if either of the old people woke when he was once in the room, there should be no one left alive to give evidence against him—he had quite made up his mind about that. And as he could hardly draw the stocking from under their very pillow without waking them, he meant murder!

Murder was plainly written on his scowling face, and expressed in every motion of his body.

Oh! for something to wake the old man, before it should be too late!

But he slept quietly on.

And now the villain removed a small pane of glass, large enough to admit his hand; he had only to open the window, climb into the room—and then——

But in turning the handle gently, he began squeezing Buz, who had settled there, and who, resenting such disturbance, planted her sting deeply in his thumb. With a dreadful oath, the man hastily withdrew his hand, but in so doing, swung violently open the window he had just unfastened.

The latter, coming against a flower-pot standing on the window-ledge, threw it with a crash upon the ground. This woke the old man, who realizing what was going on, got out of bed as quickly as he could, seized the poker, and made for the window.

Startled by the sudden pain of the sting, the noise he had himself made, and the shouts of the old man, the would-be murderer hesitated what to do, and thus gave the former more time to get to the window.

Now, to strike down a poor old couple in bed, or to cut their throats, was one thing; but to climb

through a window guarded by a man who, however old he might be, was armed with a stout poker, was quite another matter.

On the whole, the cowardly ruffian thought it best to sneak away as quietly as possible, without letting his face be seen.

But the old people went to sleep no more that night, and were very glad next day to hand over to nephew Jack the money that had so nearly cost them their lives.

And Buz, brave Buz! the instrument by which their lives had been saved, lay dead upon the ground outside the window; for on feeling her sting, the man had given a sudden pressure of his thumb, which had killed her instantly.

Perhaps it was as well after all.

She could not have withdrawn her barbed sting from the horny hand of the man, as she had from the soft body of the spider; and in losing their stings, bees always receive a fatal injury.

She was therefore spared the pain of a lingering death.

And even if she had returned to her hive without any adventure, she would probably have died before the sweet soft spring time came round again. The life of a bee is very short, and one born as Buz

was, early in the year, seldom survives the winter.

So perhaps she could hardly have died at a better time.

She had been useful all her life, and was useful even in her death.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 007 214 684 0

